MARVEL®

THE OFFICIAL MARVEL® NEWS MAGAZINE!

MARVEL AGE®

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64 JUL

ONLY 50¢

IT'S COMING THIS SUMMER--

THE EVOLUTIONARY WAR!™

Stan Lee presents

MARVEL AGE®

SALICRUP'S SECTION

Time once again for our summer fun issue, wherein we offer an in-depth preview of all the mighty Marvel summer Annuals! Dare I say it's an annual tradition around here? Well, it is! And this year the big story is that all the annuals, except for the MARVEL AGE ANNUAL, tie into THE EVOLUTIONARY WAR! But that's not all, what I'm especially excited about is that all the annuals, except for the MARVEL AGE ANNUAL, are going to be a big fat 64 pages and square-bound! Now you may not give a hoot how your comic books are bound, but for an old Marvelite like myself it's a big deal! That's how all the original Marvel Annuals were bound back in the sixties! There's something extra-special about having those flat spines with the name of the comic set in type on 'em that I can't quite explain. Perhaps it's because it makes the comic feel heftier, or sets it apart more from the regular issues, or just nostalgia. I don't know, but it sure is neat! Well, for the full story turn to page 19. Next issue we'll have the results of how you scored last year's annuals along with a Report Card for you to grade this year's models.

(Oh, in case you're wondering, this year's MARVEL AGE ANNUAL will feature all-new 5-page strips starring WOLVERINE, SPEEDBALL, DAMAGE CONTROL, and the SHADOW LINE SAGA, an expanded Marvel A to Z section, with tons of original art, previewing what's ahead for all your favorite titles, and a surprise poster contest! It'll be on sale June 28th (it ships June 7th) and it'll only set you back 75¢, or if you drop by the Marvel table at one of the major comic book conventions this summer we'll give it to you for FREE! Now isn't that the best reason ever to go to a Comicon?)

Now for the part of my column that could be called Salicrup's Soapbox (except a certain MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE columnist might get miffed), it's Marvel Zombie Controversy time! I hinted last issue that I had a scheme that might just change everything. Well, I just had lunch with the guy who actually coined the term Marvel Zombie in the first place (He won't let me reveal his true identity. Probably afraid he'd be banished from the hallowed and recently re-tiled halls of Marvel for all eternity!) and he revealed that the original meaning of Marvel Zombie was just a way to describe someone who was a big fan of Marvel. Nothing more sinister than, say, Marvel-maniac. I kinda always suspected as much, and now I'm advocating we go back to that meaning. I'm saying that from now on we stand tall, face front, lift our heads and say, "I'm a Marvel Zombie and I'm proud!" (More on this amazing turn of events next issue!)

—*Jim Salicrup*

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MARVEL®

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Here is a complete checklist of what's happening in all the **Marvel**, **Epic**, **Star** and **New Universe** titles bearing an **August** cover date. The Evolutionary Wars begin! **Groo** gets married! **ALF** goes bald! And that's just a hint of the excitement you can expect next month! Don't risk missing out on the fun. Tell your comics shop owner to reserve your favorite titles right now!

Titles Shipping April 5
On Sale April 26

☐ **DAREDEVIL** #257 — In a special tie-in with THE PUNISHER #10, **the Punisher** and **Daredevil** are both hot on the trail of a messianic serial killer — but their intentions are anything but similar! And lurking in the background . . . the beautiful but deadly **Typhoid Mary**! "The Bully" is written by **Ann Nocenti**, penciled by **John Romita Jr.**, and inked by **Al Williamson**. 75¢.

☐ **G.I. JOE SPECIAL MISSIONS** #12 — Because you demanded it, SPECIAL MISSIONS goes monthly! And to celebrate the event ace pilot (and penciler) **Herb Trimpe** guest-stars in a high-flying adventure with **G.I. Joe** pilots **Ace**, **Maverick**, and **Slip Stream**. And wait'll you see the **Cobras** they have to fight! Written by **Larry Hama** and drawn by **Herb Trimpe**. $1.00.

☐ **THE 'NAM MAGAZINE** #1 — Relive the groundbreaking series which tells the story of the Vietnam War as it really was. Join **Ed Marks** as he gets his first tastes of life — and death — in the hazardous world of the 'Nam! "First Patrol" and "Dustoff" are written by **Doug Murray**, penciled by **Michael Golden**, and inked by **Armando Gil**. 48 pages. A black and white Marvel Magazine. $2.00.

☐ **WEB OF SPIDER-MAN** #41 — **Betty Leeds** has joined a religious cult and it's up to **Spidey** to save her. But she doesn't want to be saved! **Peter Parker** must become a member of the cult to solve the mystery of its leader. So who's going to save **Spidey** from becoming entwined under his spell? Written by **Peter David**, penciled by **Alex Saviuk**, and inked by **Keith Williams**. $1.00.

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☐ **PSI FORCE** #22 — Drafted into military service, **Thomas Boyd** must undergo a psychiatric evaluation — by none other than **Nightmask**! But **Nightmask** has been having some problems of his own since Pittsburgh was destroyed. How can he evaluate **Thomas's** sanity when he isn't even sure of his own? Written by **Fabian Nicieza**, penciled by **Ron Lim**, and inked by **Mike Witherby**. Direct sales only. 32 pages. $1.25.

☐ **WEST COAST AVENGERS** #35 — As the **Wackos'** quest to save **Dr. Pym's** wife reaches its thrilling climax, the team (along with **the Vision** and **the Scarlet Witch**) heads for far-off Latveria and battles **Dr. Doom** . . . or do they? "Tales to Astonish, Part III" is written by **Steve Englehart**, penciled by **Al Milgrom**, and inked by **Mike Machlan**. 75¢.

☐ **THE PUNISHER** #10 — The explosive tie-in with DAREDEVIL #257! The quest for the fanatic serial killer concludes! Who reaches the killer first, **Punisher** or **Daredevil**? The answer's a shocker! Written by **Mike Baron**, penciled by **Whilce Portacio**, and inked by **Scott Williams**. 75¢.

☐ **BLACK PANTHER** #2 Limited Series — It was bad enough when **T'Challa** lost the power of **the Black Panther**. But now, powerless and alone, he's got to take on a band of white supremist super heroes! "For Duty, For Honor, For Country" is written by **Peter B. Gillis**, penciled by **Denys Cowan**, and inked by **Sam de la Rosa**. 32 pages on Mando paper. $1.25.

A **Limited Series** is a title which will only run for a specific number of issues.

A **Graphic Novel** is an 8½" × 11" paperback edition.

A **Digest** is a 4¾" × 6⅝" paperback edition.

A **Trade Paperback** is a 7" × 10" paperback edition.

A **Graphic Album** is a high-quality, stiff-cover comic book edition.

A **Direct Sales** title is available only at selected outlets.

Shipping Date refers to when the comics leave the printer.

☐ **WOLFPACK** #1 — Fresh from their debut in the WOLFPACK Graphic Novel, the band of teenage ninjas from the South Bronx raids a crack house! But are they prepared for what — and whom — they find inside? "Crusade" is written by **Larry Hama**, penciled by **Ron Wilson**, and inked by **Kyle Baker**. Plus: a special recap of the origin of **Wolfpack**. 75¢.

☐ **NICK FURY VS. S.H.I.E.L.D.** Limited Series #2 — As **Jasper Sitwell** is appointed the new director of **S.H.I.E.L.D., Nick Fury** goes underground . . . literally! But when **S.H.I.E.L.D.** agents follow **Nick** into the sewers, heaven help anyone who gets in their way! Will **Nick's** closest friends become his executioners? "Into the Depths" is written by **Bob Harras**, penciled by **Paul Neary**, and inked by **Kim DeMulder**, with a cover painted by **Bill Sienkiewicz**. 48 pages. A Marvel Graphic Album. $3.50.

☐ **WHAT THE—?!** Limited Series #1 — In the lampooning tradition of NOT BRAND ECCH, meet "The Pulverizer" by **Peter Gillis**, **Hilary Barta**, and **John Severin**; **Mark Gruenwald** and **Steve Ditko** go behind the scenes in a wacky send-up of our misunderstood super-villains; and **Peter Gillis**, **Jon Bogdanove**, and **Al Milgrom** present the *ultimate* super hero vs. super hero battle! 32 pages. No real ads. $1.25.

☐ **TALES OF G.I. JOE** #8 — Re-presenting from G.I. JOE #8: **Cobra** is determined to halt the launch of a space shuttle. And when the **Joes** set out to stop **Cobra's** scheme, the action rages in the water, in the swamps, and even in outer space! "Code Name: Sea-Strike" is written and illustrated by **Herb Trimpe**. 32 pages. Baxter paper. $1.50.

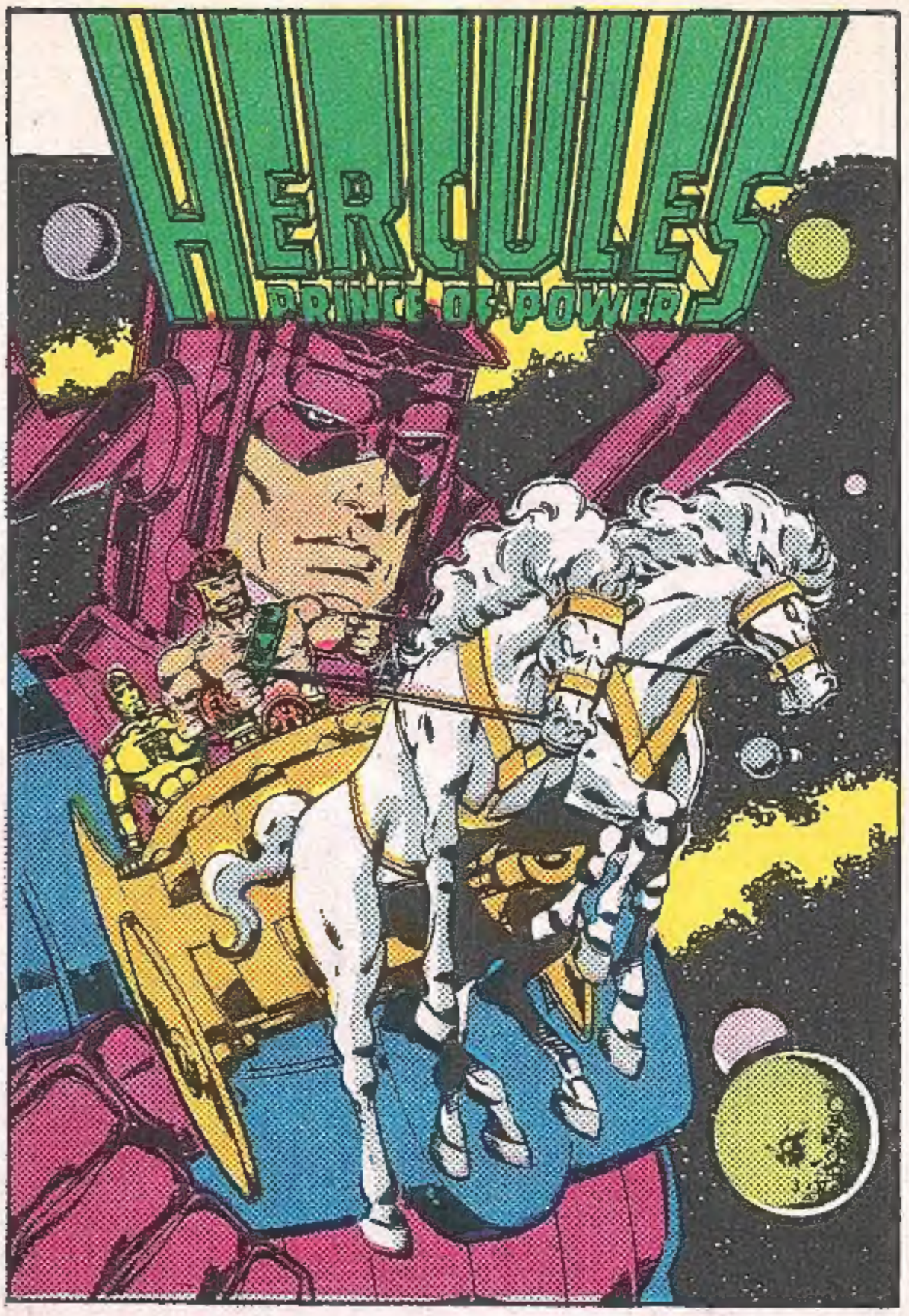
☐ **ST. GEORGE** #1 — Once, **Michael Devlin** was a simple Catholic priest. But all that changed after he encountered a monastic order of **Shadow Dwellers**. Now, armed with a suit of the **Shadow Dwellers'** cybernetic armor, **Michael Devlin** is more than a priest — he's a knight of **St. George**! Written by **D.G. Chichester** and **Margaret Clark** and illustrated by **Klaus Janson**. Painted cover by **Bill Sienkiewicz**. An Epic Comic. 32 pages. Direct sales only. $1.25.

Titles Shipping April 12
On Sale May 3

☐ **GROO THE WANDERER** #42 — **Groo** — married?! Who would be crazy enough to marry the bumbling barbarian? Creator-illustrator **Sergio Aragones** and mulcher **Mark Evanier** know the answer, and wait till you see what it is! An Epic Comic. 32 pages. $1.00.

☐ **HEATHCLIFF** #25 — There are laughs aplenty when **Heathcliff** is mistaken for the ambassador of Topsie-Turvia. But there's danger too, as he finds himself in the midst of international intrigue and the fiendish plot of a "Spy in the Sky!" Written by **Nate Butler**, penciled by **Warren Kremer**, and inked by **Roberta Edelman**. A Star Comic. $1.00.

☐ **POWER PACK** #39 — Just when the **Power** kids are about to reveal the secret of their superpowers to their parents, they witness the consequences of **Lightrakker's** revelation to the world of her abilities! Will the acclaim, and the condemnation of **Lightrakker** cause them to stay quiet? But if they do, they would wind up in *worse* trouble! "Lights, Camera, Action" is written by **Louise Simonson**, penciled by **Sal Velluto**, and inked by **Mark Farmer**. Direct Sales only. $1.25.



☐ **HERCULES** Trade Paperback — Re-presenting the first HERCULES Limited Series in a high-quality paperback edition. Far in the future, **Hercules** is banished from Olympus to learn humility. What follows is a mad romp through space as the dynamic demi-god meets **Rigellians**, rescues fair maidens, and goes one-on-one with **Galactus** himself! Written, penciled, and inked by **Bob Layton**. 96 pages. $5.95.

☐ **THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN** #303 — **Silver Sable** enlists the aid of **Spidey** and the **Sandman** to enact revenge upon the neo-Nazi, **Franz Kraus**, who tried to kill her in issue #301. Written by **David Michelinie** and drawn by **Todd McFarlane**. $1.00.

☐ **STAR COMICS MAGAZINE** #11 — Laughs and gasps galore! Relive classic tales selected from the pages of HEATHCLIFF, MADBALLS, MUPPET BABIES, and CARE BEARS. A 64-page Marvel digest. $1.50.

☐ **X-FACTOR ANNUAL** #3 — Beginning the saga of **the Evolutionary Wars**. It's a strange alliance when **X-Factor** travels to **the Mole Man's** underground kingdom of Subterranea to save **the Subterraneans** from genetic transfiguration at the hands of **the High Evolutionary**! Written by **Louise Simonson**, penciled by **Terry Shoemaker**, and inked by **Al Milgrom**. Also: Uncover the secret past of **the High Evolutionary**. Who shaped his beliefs? What was his connection with the father of the original **Spider Woman**? You won't believe your eyes when you see the first Genetic Accelerator! Scripted by **Mark Gruenwald** and penciled by **Paul Neary**. Plus more special bonuses: new insight into the background of **X-Factor** courtesy of writer **Louise Simonson** and penciler **Tom Artis**, never-before-seen versions of X-FACTOR covers drawn by **Jerry Ordway** and **David Mazzuchelli**, and pin-ups by **Terry Shoemaker** and **John Byrne**! 64pages. $1.75.

☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA** #344 — **The Serpent Society** takes over Washington, DC in this double-sized spectacular! The only one who can stop their evil plans is **the Captain** — but first he's got to battle the biggest snake of all! "Don't Tread on Me" is written by **Mark Gruenwald**, penciled by **Kieron Dwyer**, and inked by **Al Milgrom**. $1.50.

☐ **STRANGE TALES** #17 — Two tales of suspense in one book!

In CLOAK AND DAGGER, **Dagger** finds herself powerless against the shadow beings commanded by **Night**! And the demonic **Mr. Jip** tightens his grip on **Cloak's** soul! "Desperate Straits" is written by **Terry Austin**, penciled by **Dan Lawlis**, and inked by **Bob Wiacek**.

In DOCTOR STRANGE, the Master of the Mystic Arts returns to Earth and home — and discovers he's not wanted! "This Old Man Came Rolling Home" is written by **Peter Gillis**, penciled by **Rich Case**, and inked by **Randy Emberlin**. 75¢.

☐ **THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN** #150 — Deep in the heart of the Kushite wilderness, **Conan** must defend a fortress against an army of zombies! The only way to stop the zombies is to summon an ancient war god. But the ritual to summon the war god will take a week! Can even the savage Cimmerian hold off an army of the dead for a full seven days? "Call to the Slain" is written by **Chuck Dixon**, penciled by **Gary Kwapisz**, and inked by **Ernie Chan**. A 64-page, black and white Marvel magazine. $2.00.

☐ **ALPHA FLIGHT** #61 — The Canadian government orders **Alpha Flight** to obey its orders — or else! Will **Alpha Flight** agree to follow their government's new rules, or, as **Steve Rogers** did with the U.S. government, refuse? The answer could mean the end of **Alpha Flight** as you know it! "The Alpha Flight Inquisition" is written by **Bill Mantlo**, penciled by **Jim Lee**, and inked by **Al Milgrom**. 75¢.

☐ **ALF** #6 — **ALF's** shedding his coat: what will the **Tanners** do with forty pounds of hair . . . not to mention a hairless alien?! "Aw, Shed Up" is written by **Michael Gallagher**, penciled by **Dave Manak**, and inked by **Marie Severin**. And featuring a new cover painting of America's favorite **Alien Life Form** by **Dave Manak**. A Star Comic. $1.00.

☐ **THE NEW MUTANTS** #66 — **Illyana** vs. **Forge**! 'Nuff said! "To Curse The Darkness" is written by **Louise Simonson**, penciled by **Bret Blevins**, and inked by **Terry Austin**. $1.00.

☐ **SOLO AVENGERS** #9 — Two titanic tales for the price of one!

The masked vigilante, **Blind Justice** has been tracking down criminals of all types — and sentencing them to death! Even with the aid of the ebon-cloaked **Shroud**, can **Hawkeye** stop **Blind Justice** before he kills again? "Justice Kills" is scripted by **Tom DeFalco**, penciled by **Mark Bright**, and inked by **Jose Marzan**.

Plus: Once they were man and wife. But when **Hellcat** takes on the murderously maniacal **Mad Dog** . . . (dare we say it?) all Hell breaks loose! Written by **J.M. DeMatteis**, penciled by**June Brigman**, and inked by **Stan Drake**. With a cover by **June Brigman** and **Stan Drake**. 75¢.

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☐ **D.P. 7 #22** — At last — learn what's happened to all your favorite New Universe characters since the Pitt Disaster! The **Kickers' Jack Magniconte** — the leader of a paranormal force! **Nightmask** — a psychologist for the army! Plus the return of **Blood Hound**! And **D.P. 7** — drafted! Is **D.P. 7** ready for the army? More importantly, is the army ready for *them?* "Army Dreamers" is written by **Mark Gruenwald**, penciled by **Paul Ryan**, and inked by **Danny Bulanadi**. 32 pages. Direct sales only. $1.25.

Titles Shipping April 19
On Sale May 10

☐ **THE INCREDIBLE HULK #346** — In the wake of the race for the gamma bombs, **the Leader, Rick Jones, Betty Banner**, and **SH.I.E.L.D.'s Clay Quartermain** come to terms with what's happened . . . and **the Leader** reveals his sinister plan! Written by **Peter David**. 75¢.

☐ **SILVER SURFER #14** — **The Silver Surfer** vs. **the Silver Surfer**! Can the real **Surfer** beat his evil twin? Written by **Steve Englehart**, penciled by **Joe Staton**, and inked by **Joe Rubinstein**. $1.00.

☐ **MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE #65** — MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS . . . the debut of WOLVERINE, the return of MAN THING, MASTER OF KUNG FU, KILLRAVEN, DRACULA and much more! Plus . . . a special report on **Jack Kirby's** HEROES AND VILLAINS, the **Ann Nocenti** Interview, the HERCULES Graphic Novel, **Stan's** Soapbox, **Hembeck**, Mutant Report, Coming Attractions, letters . . . whew! Direct sales only. 50¢.

☐ **THE AVENGERS #294** — You think you've got problems? **Captain Marvel** is dying! **The Black Knight** is turning into a berserker! And the universe-threatening **Nebula** secretly controls **the Avengers**! And as if that weren't bad enough, the council of **Kangs** makes an astonishing move! Written by **Walt Simonson**, penciled by **John Buscema**, and inked by **Tom Palmer**. 75¢.

☐ **CONAN THE BARBARIAN #209** — When **Conan's** men need horses, it's up to the mighty barbarian to supply them. But to get the herd he needs, **Conan** will have to first tame the herd's leader — the bat-winged horse that once belonged to the demonic **Devourer of Souls**! "Dark Horse" is written by **Jim Owsley**, penciled by **Val Semeiks**, and inked by **Geof Isherwood**. $1.00.

☐ **FLINTSTONE KIDS #7** — What starts out as a peaceful school outing turns into a wild, dangerous, and hilarious event when **Fred** and **Barney** get lost in Yellowrock National Park! It certainly is a "Bad Day in Bedrock!" Written by **Angelo DeCesare**, penciled by **Warren Kremer**, and inked by **Jon D'Agostino**. A Star Comic. $1.00.

☐ **G.I. JOE #74** — There's all-out action when the invasion of Cobra Island begins! Meet the latest additions to the ranks of **Cobra** — even the **Joes** may not be a match for them! "Alliance of Convenience" is written by **Larry Hama**, penciled by **Ron Wagner**, and inked by **Randy Emberlin**. $1.00.

☐ **SILVERHAWKS #7** — Can **Lt. Quicksilver** triumph in a battle with his dark self? He'd better, if he's going to keep the riches of Delorae from being stolen by the "Dark Bird!" Written by **Steve Perry**, penciled by **Mike Witherby**, and inked by **Fred Fredericks**. A Star Comic. $1.00.

☐ **DOCTOR ZERO #2** — As part of his plan to influence world events, **Doctor Zero** plots to assassinate a leading U.S. weapons designer. But then, things go very, very wrong . . . Written by **D.G. Chichester** and **Margaret Clark**, penciled by **Denys Cowan**, and inked by **Bill Sienkiewicz**, with a cover painted by **Jon J Muth**. An Epic Comic. 32 pages. $1.25.

☐ **THE X-MEN #232** — **X-Men** beware! **The Brood** is back! Written by **Chris Claremont**, penciled by **Mark Silvestri**, and inked by **Dan Green**. $1.00.

☐ **THE PUNISHER ANNUAL #1** — Look out! Here come the **High Evolutionary's Eliminators**! They're under orders to destroy all the drug fields in South America — and they've got more than enough power to do it! You'd think **the Punisher** would be overjoyed! But these "allies" could be more dangerous than even his greatest enemy! **The Punisher** must decide — should he join them, or try to stop them! Written by **Mike Baron**, penciled by **Mark Texiera**, and inked by **Scott Williams**. Plus: more secrets of the **High Evolutionary** are revealed in chapter two of the origin of **the High Evolutionary**. Written by **Mark Gruenwald** and penciled by **Paul Neary**. $1.75.

☐ **MARVEL FANFARE #39** — It's a mystical change of pace for **Hawkeye** when the Avenging archer goes up against a cat spirit that's determined to rip the West Coast asunder! "A Cat's Tale" is written by **J.M. DeMatteis**, penciled by **Joe Station**, and inked by **Kim DeMulder**. Also: A new tale starring the mysterious **Moon Knight**, written by **Mike Carlin**, penciled by **Bill Reinhold**, and inked by **Jim Fern**. 32 pages on Hudson paper. $1.95.

☐ **MARVEL TALES** #214 — Re-presenting from AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #161 the saga of **Spider-Man** versus **Nightcrawler**! Plus . . . **the Punisher** and the merciless **Jigsaw**! Written by **Len Wein**, penciled by **Ross Andru**, and inked by **Mike Esposito** and **Dave Hunt**. Plus: part 2 of the spectacular **Spider-Ham's** wacky "Punfisher's Tail." Written by **Michael Eury**, penciled by **Alan Kupperberg**, and inked by **Joe Albelo**. 75¢.

new universe

☐ **JUSTICE** #22 — **Justice** goes berserk! He believes that he's being attacked by **Darquill** and the **Forces of Winter**. Trouble is, the attack is all in his mind, but try and tell him that — before he fries you! Written by **Peter David**. Direct Sales only. $1.25.

Titles Shipping April 26
On Sale May 17

☐ **CONAN SAGA** #15 — Re-presenting from SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #7 one of **Conan's** eeriest adventures. **Conan** confronts the wizard **Shamash-Shum-Ukin** who claims to be a master of time. But his sorcerous experiments threaten to unleash the horrors of the past *and* the future on the Hyborean nations. "Citadel at the Center of Time" is written by **Roy Thomas**, penciled by **John Buscema**, and inked by **Alfredo Alacala**. A Marvel Magazine. $2.00.

☐ **X-FACTOR** #31 — **Iceman** and **Beast** battle **Infectia**! But **Bobby** and **Hank's** real problem is, how can they force her to cure **the Beast**? Meanwhile, **Marvel Girl** and **Cyclops** confront **the Freedom Force** in Dallas! "Kiss Off" is written by **Louise Simonson**, penciled by **Walt Simonson**, and inked by **Bob Wiacek**. $1.00.

☐ **ALIEN LEGION** #5 — The marauding **Harkillons** against a *single* **Legionnaire**? Sounds like an easy win for **the Harkillons**, right? Not when **the Legionnaire** is **Jugger Grimrod**, a guy with the sunny temperament of **Wolverine**! Written by **Chuck Dixon**, penciled by **Larry Stroman**, and inked by **Mark Farmer**. An Epic Comic. 32 pages. Direct sales only. $1.25.

☐ **THE 'NAM** #21 — The wounded medic, **Andy Clark**, is awarded a Purple Heart. But it is a medal he believes that others need more than he does! But complicating his desire to give the medal to those who deserve it is girl trouble — South Vietnamese style! "Do Not Forsake Me" is written by **Doug Murray**, penciled by **Wayne Vansant**, and inked by **Geof Isherwood**, with a cover by **Bob Camp**. 32 pages. $1.25.

☐ **G.I. JOE COMICS MAGAZINE** #11 — Re-presenting from G.I. JOE #s 29–31: **The Joes** take on **Cobra** and defend Ft. Wadsworth against **Zartan** and **the Dreadnoks**! And **Snake-Eyes** returns, only to find the diabolical **Destro** and **Firefly** staking out his home! "Beached Whale" and "Darkness" are written by **Larry Hama**, penciled by **Frank Springer**, and inked by **Andy Mushynsky**, and "All Fall Down" is written by **Larry Hama**, penciled by **Rod Whigham**, and inked by **Andy Mushynsky**. A 64-page Marvel Digest. $1.50.

☐ **SILVER SURFER ANNUAL** #1 — The Evolutionary Wars continue as **the Super Skrull** returns! How can **the Surfer** hope to win a battle that has **the Skrull** who possesses all the powers of **the Fantastic Four** on one side, the unstoppable **High Evolutionary** on the other — and the enigmatic **Eternals** waiting in the wings! Written by **Steve Englehart**, penciled by **Joe Staton**, and inked by **Joe Rubinstein**. Plus: Chapter 3 in the origin of the **High Evolutionary**! Written by **Mark Gruenwald** and penciled by **Paul Neary**. 64 pages. $1.75.

☐ **THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN** #141 — **Spider-Man** teams up with **the Punisher** to tackle **Tombstone**, the villain who broke **Robbie Robertson's** back. But **Tombstone** has an ace up his sleeve: a deadly new nemesis called **the Persuader**, who is out to control **the Punisher's** mind. Written by **Gerry Conway** and drawn by **Sal Buscema**. $1.00.

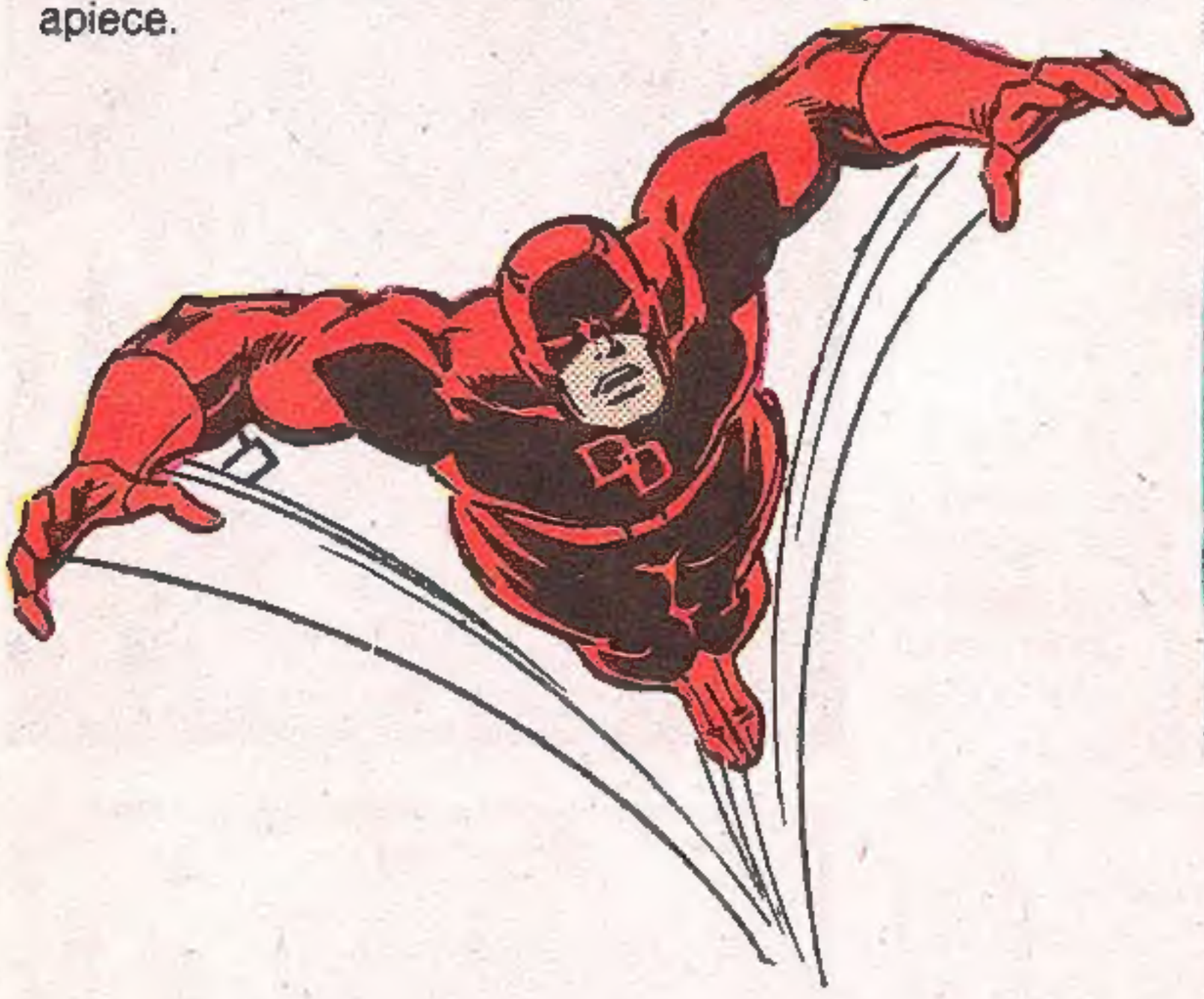
☐ **CLASSIC X-MEN** #24 — Reprinting from THE UNCANNY X-MEN #118: Far from home, **the X-Men** join the mutant, **Sunfire**, to battle **the Mandroids**, armored soldiers designed to be a match for **the Avengers** themselves! If **the X-Men** fail — Japan is doomed! "The Submergence of Japan" is scripted by **Chris Claremont**, penciled by **John Byrne**, and inked by **Ricardo Villamonte**. Also: An all-new story featuring **Jean Grey**, written by **Chris Claremont** and illustrated by **John Bolton**. 32 pages. $1.00.

☐ **FRAGGLE ROCK** #5 — From the original FRAGGLE ROCK #5: **Wembley** releases a genie from a bottle. But the results aren't quite what he expected when the genie turns out to be more interested in granting his own wishes than **Wembley's**! How can **Wembley** get the troublesome spirit back in the bottle? "The Mean Genie" is written by **Stan Kay** and drawn by **Marie Severin**. A Star Comics 6-issue Limited Series. $1.00.

☐ **THE OFFICIAL MARVEL COMICS INDEX TO THE AVENGERS #7** — Continuing our issue-by-issue retrospective of the lives of everyone's favorite assemblers. Complete with synopses of every story and full-color reproductions of every cover. In this issue: THE AVENGERS #s 127–148 and GIANT-SIZE AVENGERS #s 2–4, featuring the death of **the Swordsman**, the origin of **the Vision**, and the wedding of **the Vision** and **the Scarlet Witch**. New wraparound cover by **Bob Layton**. 48 pages. A Marvel Graphic Album. $2.95.

☐ **THE FANTASTIC FOUR #317** — **The Molecule Man**, **the Cosmic Cube**, and **the FF**! What more could you ask for? How about the astonishing return of the most powerful cosmic character in the Marvel Universe! We kid you not! Written by **Steve Englehart**, penciled by **Keith Pollard**, and inked by **Joe Sinnott**. 75¢.

☐ **MARVEL PRESS POSTERS** — Four more posters to adorn your walls and impress your friends! Choose from **Spider-Man** by **Todd McFarlane**, **Iron Man** by **Mike Zeck**, **Phil Zimmelman**, and **Eliot Brown**, **Daredevil** by **David Mazzuchelli**, and **Thor** by **Ron Frenz** and **Daniel Horne**. Or make things easier on yourself and buy 'em all! $4.95 apiece.



☐ **THOR #394** — Meet **Tempest**, **Sky Hawk**, and **Earth Lord**! Together, they're **the Earth Force** . . . and their orders are to kill **Thor**! And don't miss the special guest appearance by everyone's favorite sightless super hero, **Daredevil**! "Enter the Earth Force" is written by **Tom DeFalco**, penciled by **Ron Frenz**, and inked by **Brett Breeding**. 75¢.

☐ **THE TRANSFORMERS #43** — **The Autobot**; **Sky Lynx**, must save **the Space Hiker kids** from becoming slaves in an intergalactic circus side show in the "Kosmic Karnival." Written by **Bob Budiansky**, penciled by **Jose Delbo**, and inked by **Dave Hunt**. $1.00.

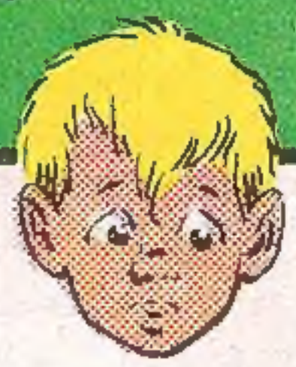
☐ **IRON MAN #233** — While **Tony Stark's** off demonstrating his firm's latest technology, armored thugs break into the Stark Enterprises complex! With **Iron Man** nowhere in sight, nothing can stop the criminals — nothing but the astonishing **Ant-Man**, that is! Co-plotted and scripted by **David Michelinie**, penciled by **Jackson Guice**, and co-plotted and inked by **Bob Layton**. 75¢.

☐ **LAST OF THE DRAGONS** Graphic Novel — From the pages of EPIC ILLUSTRATED comes a tale of ninjas and giant dragons, set in 19th Century Japan and America. Rogue Japanese priests are trying to warp the noble giant dragons to their own evil purposes. Only two proud warriors stand in their way. Will they be enough? Plotted and penciled by **Carl Potts**, scripted by **Denny O'Neil**, and inked by **Terry Austin**. $6.95.

SUPER-VILLAIN CHECKLIST

Blind Justice — SOLO AVENGERS #9
The Brood — THE X-MEN #232
Doom, Kristoff — WEST COAST AVENGERS #35
Earth Force — THOR #394
Eliminators — THE PUNISHER ANNUAL #1
Forge — THE NEW MUTANTS #66
Freedom Force — THE NEW MUTANTS #66
High Evolutionary — X-FACTOR ANNUAL #3, SILVER SURFER ANNUAL #1, THE PUNISHER ANNUAL #1
Infectia — X-FACTOR #31
Jigsaw — MARVEL TALES #204
Kraue, Franz — THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #301
The Leader — THE INCREDIBLE HULK #346
Mad Dog — SOLO AVENGERS #9
Mr. Jip — STRANGE TALES #17
Mole Man — X-FACTOR ANNUAL #3
The Molecule Man — THE FANTASTIC FOUR #317
Nebula — THE AVENGERS #294
New Kanga — THE AVENGERS #294
Night — STRANGE TALES #17
The Serpent Society — CAPTAIN AMERICA #344
Super-Skrull — SILVER SURFER ANNUAL #1
The Supremists — BLACK PANTHER #2
Tombstone — SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #141
Typhoid Mary — DAREDEVIL #257

NEWSWATCH



A SOUPCON OF SCINTILLATING SELECTIONS FROM SAVANTS BEHIND THE SCENES

ITEM: We should have seen it coming. The signs have been there ever since she started scripting the likes of DAREDEVIL and the LONGSHOT Limited Series. But it's still come as something of a shock around the Bullpen. Yes, the rumors are true: **Ann Nocenti** is leaving her position as editor of THE X-MEN and THE NEW MUTANTS to become a full-time free-lance writer!

While we're wishing Ann well, let's also congratulate her assistant, **Terry Kavanagh**, on his new promotion to full editor! And let's not forget **Bob Harras's** assistant, **Bobbie Chase**, who's tied with Terry for the title of "newest editor on the block!"

You'd think that all these changes would make it tough enough to keep tabs on who's editing which series. But you know our motto: "no confusion too great, no bewilderment too convoluted!" So we've decided to shuffle our editors again, just to make it even *harder* to sort it all out.

After many long hours and wrong turns, we've finally figured out who's editing which Marvel Universe titles — we think. So pull out your pencils and official Marvel Editor Scorecards, 'cause here we go

Mark Gruenwald and **Gregory Wright**:
- SOLO AVENGERS
- THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE

Ralph Macchio and **Marc Siry**:
- THE AVENGERS
- THOR
- CAPTAIN AMERICA
- DAREDEVIL
- THE FANTASTIC FOUR

Carl Potts and **Marc McLaurin**:
- POWER PACK
- THE PUNISHER
- DR. STRANGE
- CLOAK AND DAGGER
- STRIKEFORCE: MORITURI
- ALPHA FLIGHT

Bob Harras and **Daryl Edelman**:
- THE X-MEN
- CLASSIC X-MEN
- X-FACTOR
- THE NEW MUTANTS
- WOLVERINE

Jim Salicrup and **Glenn Herdling**:
- THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
- THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN
- WEB OF SPIDER-MAN
- MARVEL UNIVERSE (a monthly comic book, not to be confused with THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE)
- MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE (with **Dwight Zimmerman**)

Don Daley and **Pat Redding**:
- THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL
- TRANSFORMERS
- THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN
- CONAN THE BARBARIAN
- DINO-RIDERS

Howard Mackie and **David Wohl**:
- D.P. 7
- JUSTICE
- PSI-FORCE
- THE STAR BRAND
- WEST COAST AVENGERS
- IRON MAN

Mike Higgins and **Mike Rockwitz**:
- MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS (weekly)
- SILVER SURFER

Craig Anderson:
- POWERMAN

Terry Kavanagh:
- SPEEDBALL
- THE 'NAM
- SEMPER FI
- EXCALIBUR

Bobbie Chase:
- G.I. JOE
- G.I. JOE SPECIAL MISSIONS
- THE NTH MAN
- STEELTOWN ROCKERS
- THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Whew! And that's not even counting all of our Star Comics and Epic Comics series! Sure is an awful lot of info to keep track of. We don't know about you, but *we're* going to be sure to keep a copy of this list close at hand!

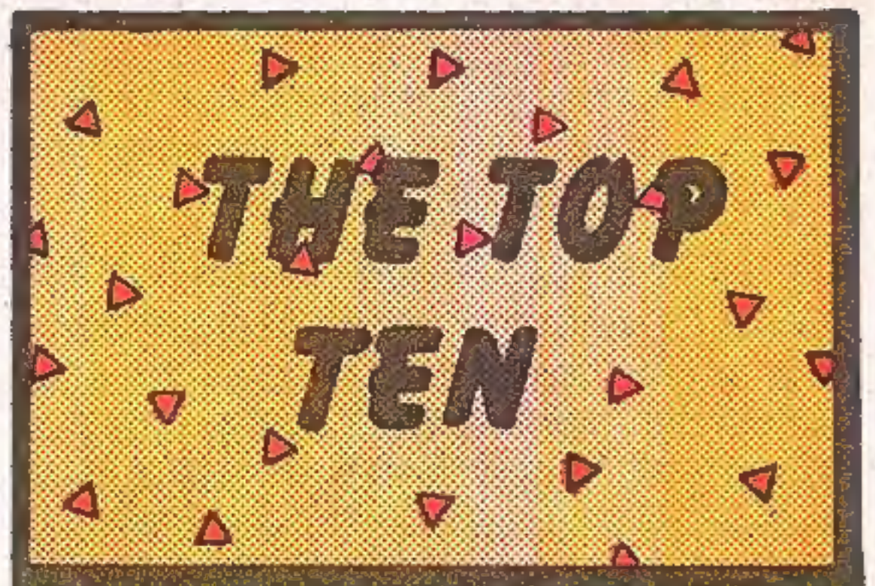
Of course, we may need a new one by *next* week, though!

ITEM: So you think you know all there is to know about pint-size POWER PACK and FANTASTIC FOUR star **Franklin Richards**, eh? Well, did you know that Franklin's current looks are actually based on a real person?

Who is this man of mystery, you ask? Wonder no longer, because now it can be revealed: Franklin Richards' real-life counterpart is none other than **Benjamin Kal-El Bogdanove**, the 3-year-old son of POWER PACK penciler **Jon Bogdanove**! (As for Kal-El's somewhat unusual name, well, wouldja believe he was named for his great-great-grandfather?)

(Naw, we didn't think so.)

Ever since Jon started modeling Franklin on Kal-El back in POWER PACK #22, Franklin has started resembling him in more than just appearance. When John began scribbling quotes from his son into POWER PACK pages for fun, writer **Louise Simonson** started incorporating them into her scripts! Anyone who loves the "lotsa 'postrophes" in Franklin's dialogue can rest assured that they come straight from life. And to answer the big question burning in your minds: Yes, just like Franklin, Kal-El's favorite food really is lentil soup.



It's Top Ten time again! This month's list of the ten best-selling titles in the Direct Sales market is for the month of December. It's compiled by our Vice-President/Direct Sales **Carol Kalish** and enjoyed by mutie-lovers and web-head fanatics everywhere.

1 — **X-MEN** #228
2 — **EXCALIBUR** #1
3 — **X-FACTOR** #27
4 — **THE NEW MUTANTS** #62
5 — **THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN** #299
6 — **SILVER SURFER** #10
7 — **CLASSIC X-MEN** #20
8 — **THE 'NAM** #17
9 — **WEB OF SPIDER-MAN** #37
10 — **SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN** #137

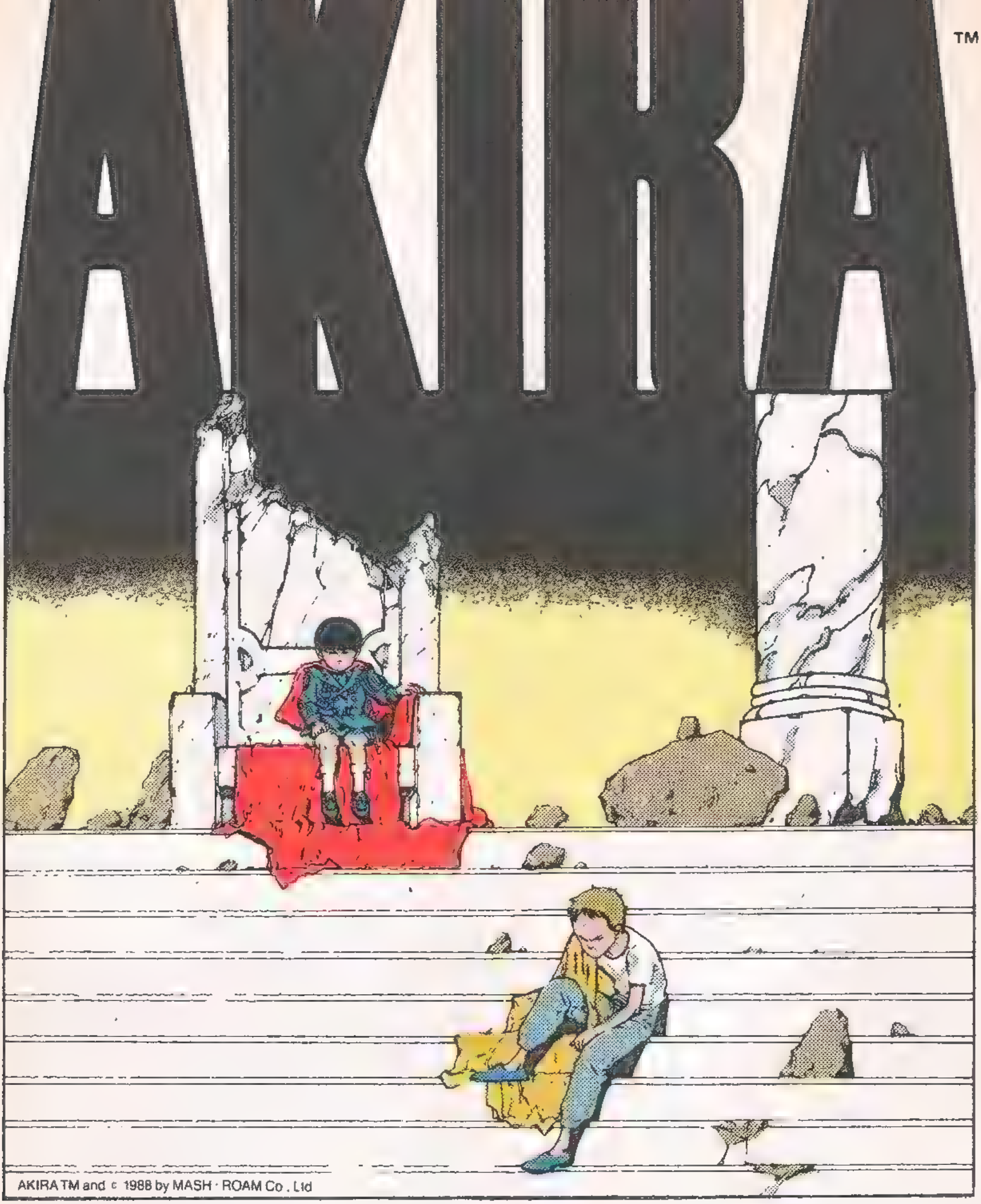
X-TRA

THE MUTANT REPORT

X-TRA

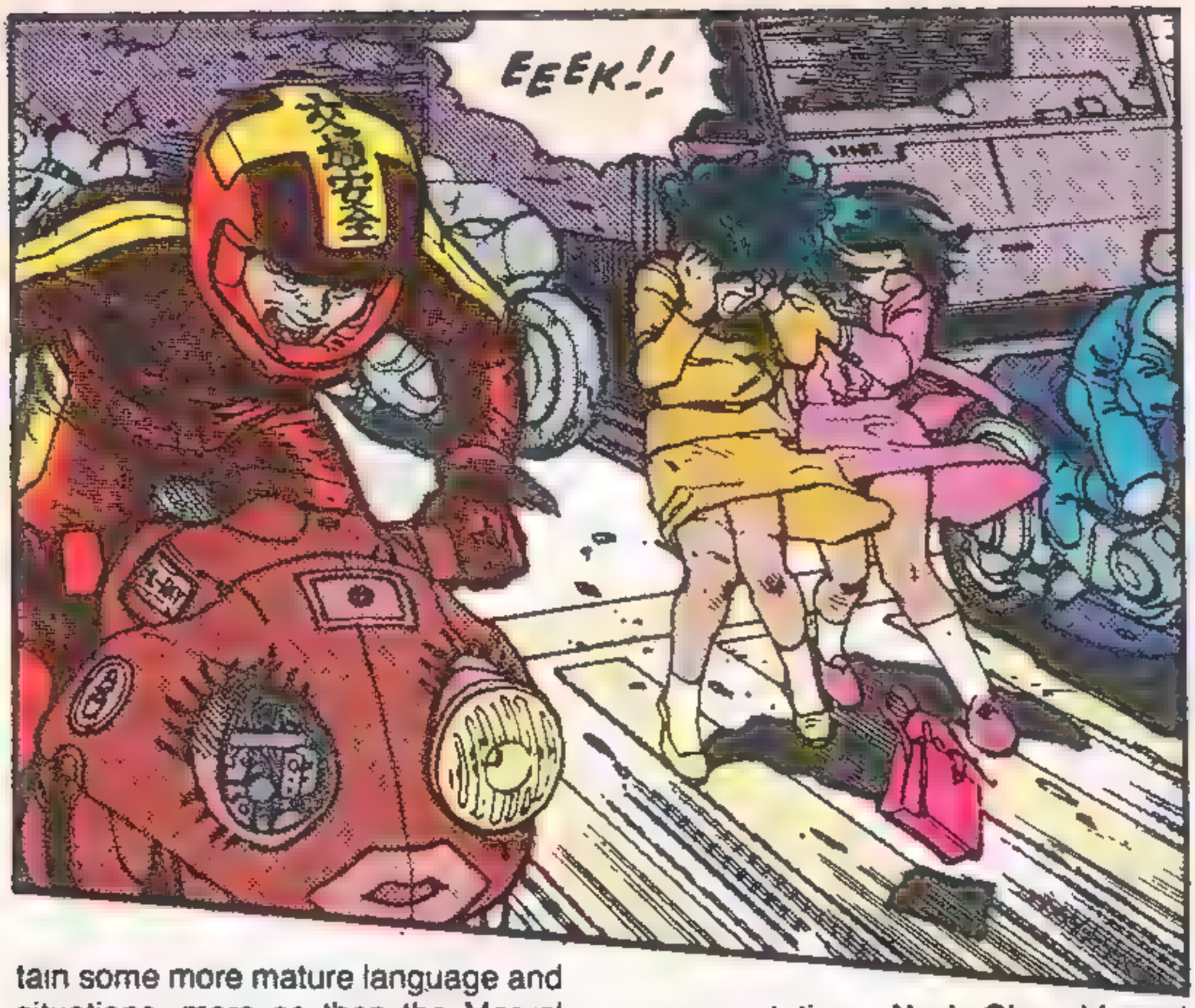
VOLUME 3 "THE NEXT STEP IN NEWS EVOLUTION" NUMBER 6

Here's the never before published cover to X-FACTOR #1 by Jackson Guice and Bob Layton. Inset: The published version by Walt Simonson and Joe Rubinstein.



The Third World War began in 1992 with the explosion of a new type of bomb over Japan. Nine hours later, the world lay devastated. Thirty-eight years later, the world is at last recovering. But near ground zero of the original destruction, a strange encounter takes place. **Kaneda** — a young, restless juvenile delinquent committed to defying authority — nearly runs down a child with his motorcycle. A child with the wizened face of an old man. A child with powers beyond physical science. The child is **Number 26**. He is the harbinger of deadly events which will sweep Kaneda into a struggle between powerful and secret forces. The setting is Neo-Tokyo, a city nearing the brink of anarchy, as government forces battle rebel groups for control of someone or something feared and prized for the potential to shake the recovering world to its foundations. Someone or something known only as . . . **AKIRA**.

Beginning this May, AKIRA will be coming to Epic Comics. "AKIRA is actually one gigantic graphic novel," said Epic Editor in Chief **Archie Goodwin**. "It's the creation of one of Japan's most gifted comic artists, **Katsuhiro Otomo**." AKIRA, which originally appeared in the Japanese weekly magazine YOUNG, is one of the most popular comic series in Japan. "The story focuses on Kaneda, who unwittingly becomes a catalyst in unleashing the power of Akira," Archie said. "It's very fast-paced, with elements of action and drama which will attract fans of the X-MEN and MOON-SHADOW alike. The story does con-



tain some more mature language and situations, more so than the Marvel Universe, but not excessively so."

"AKIRA's world is not a '**Mad Max**' vision of destroyed utopia at all," Archie continued. "It's a world recovering from devastation, but their day-to-day life isn't all that different from ours. Kaneda and his friends are bright and restless, but they're not super heroes. When they meet Number 26, they don't suddenly become rebel leaders. When a member of Kaneda's motorcycle gang is injured in the initial encounter with Number 26, Kaneda is suspicious, but he doesn't really know what he's stumbled across." Number 26 is actually a child, and an escapee from a government center for children with mutated mental powers. These children are at the center of the struggle between the government and the rebels, and Kaneda soon finds himself sucked into the intrigue. Akira is at the center of the mystery, and the discovery of who or what is Akira is a focal point for many different characters.

"In Japan, the story was serialized weekly, and then slowly released in 300-plus page books. Neither method would work well in the United States, though," Archie said. "Since this is a fast-paced story with a lot of suspense, we decided to make it a monthly book, but a 64-page monthly book."

The collaborative project began when Marvel President **Jim Galton** spotted the Kodansha edition of AKIRA at the Bologna Book Fair. Intrigued by the book, he approached Archie with the possibility of an Epic translation. "It was actually **Jo Duffy** who introduced me to AKIRA," Archie recalled, "so I was delighted and amazed when Jim proposed the idea." A series of meetings with Kodansha representatives **Nori Okazaki** and **Yuka Ando** ironed out all the details, particularly Otomo's close supervision of the project.

The 1,800-page story will be adapted into English by Jo Duffy, who will be working with Otomo and his original Japanese editor, **Koiche Yuri**, to insure that the spirit of Otomo's writing remains intact through translation. "AKIRA is broken-down into individual chapters that will allow readers convenient 'jumping-on' points," Jo said. "Otomo's writing allows new readers to pick up what is going on in the story, even if they didn't start with the beginning. It's my job to create dialogue which makes sense to an American audience, and yet reflects the spirit of what Otomo originally intended."

Adding the English translations to the Japanese artwork presents a problem, however, as letterer **Michael Higgins** explained, "Japanese lettering reads up and down, instead of side to side, plus their pages read from right to left, not left to right. Otomo is checking each panel meticulously, sometimes adding and changing art or even drawing whole new panels, so that the new lettering will fit. I letter everything out of order, so I have no idea what's going on in the story, but the art looks great."

Although AKIRA has been reprinted in a series of five Japanese volumes by Kodansha Press, it has never before appeared in color. "When I suggested adding coloring, Otomo was very enthusiastic," Archie said. "He personally chose **Steve Oliff** to color the book."

AKIRA will be printed in the bookshelf format, as was the popular BLOOD series from Epic. The high-quality format will permit accurate reproduction of Otomo's fine line work and delicate shading, which would have been lost in a standard comic format. "The process will also allow Steve to use color values unavailable in a regular comic," Archie added.

The possibility exists that the entire book will be colored by computer. "Steve is very interested in using this process," Archie said. The black and white original art would be digitally encoded on a disc and sent to Oliff for coloring. The technique, made possible by technological advances in computer graphics, permits highly detailed coloring effects.

"Everything done on this book is done with Otomo's personal approval," Archie said, "which is why he chose Epic to publish the English AKIRA. We're the logical place to take a project like this." Epic is doing the critically acclaimed series of Moebius Graphic Novels, which, like AKIRA, are creator owned and translated from their original language into English. "Why does Epic want to do AKIRA? We'd be crazy not to!" Archie said. "This is excellent comics . . . you could even say that Otomo is to Japanese comics what Moebius is to European."

Archie will be editing the first few issues of AKIRA himself, with assistance from **Mark Chiarello**, the Epic editorial assistant. **Dan Chichester** will take over as editor at a later date. "I couldn't resist," Archie said. "Even though I'm usually more involved in developing projects and promoting the Epic line of books, I just had to get personally involved in AKIRA.

"We're very excited about this," Archie concluded. "AKIRA is the most famous work of a superb draftsman, and a work that Epic is proud to present in its definitive English edition."

—Sara Tuchinsky

THE MARVEL® AGE INTERVIEW

RON FRENZ

From KA-ZAR and STAR WARS to THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN and most recently, THOR, penciler **Ron Frenz** has collected an ever-growing following because of his powerful story-telling ability which combines the action and drama of the best of Marvel Comics from the sixties with the depth and emotional sensitivity of today's tales.

In an exclusive interview conducted by **Peter Sanderson** and transcribed by **Dwight Jon Zimmerman**, the penciler from Pittsburgh readily revealed the facts on how he got his start, his feelings about **Spider-Man** and his plans for **Thor** — with one notable exception.

When did you decide to become a cartoonist?

From about the age of eight, if you asked me what I wanted to do, I'd say grow up and work for Marvel Comics and draw THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN.

When I got into high school, I took a commercial arts course at one of the local vocational-technical schools here in Pittsburgh. And I had a really good instructor who beat it into my head that I was bottle-necking myself by doing only comics-related things. This was my junior year in high school, so I started broadening my perspective a little. Later, I won a half-scholarship to the Art Institute of Pittsburgh and went there for two years. I paid attention to life drawing classes, all kinds of design techniques

How did all this affect your comics work?

It improved it 150%. It was a big renaissance for me — the realization that everything in art applies. What many young people who show me their portfolios at conventions don't realize is that comics are more than just big guys in tights and capes punching each other. You have to be able to draw more of everything well in comics than almost any other branch of the commercial art world. You have to be able to draw city streets, cars, buses, trucks, a cop on horseback, a cowboy on horseback, a woman, people in plain, regular clothes *and* people in tights with bulging muscles And not only do you have to be able to draw it all, you have to make it convincing enough to supply the reader with a realistic backdrop for all the fantastic stuff that's going on

What did you do after art school?

After graduating from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, I was fortunate enough to meet [then-Editor-in-Chief) **Jim Shooter** in Pittsburgh when he was doing a comics shop appearance. He looked at my stuff, told me to send him xeroxes and he'd make sure it got in front of editors. I sent the samples and waited. Unfortunately, there didn't seem to be anything available. There was no contact from Marvel for about a year. This was at the end of 1980. When I didn't hear from Marvel by the beginning of 1981, it was obvious that I had to pursue other options. I got a job at Anivision Limited doing storyboard layouts, which is actually very similar to comic book work.

How did you like animation?

I enjoyed it. It's very similar, as I said. I was working there for roughly a year when I got a phone call from Marvel. **Louise Jones** [now Louise Simonson] was editing the KA-ZAR book and offered me issue #17 to draw. I did it, sent it in, and waited to hear from her. When I did, she had yet to assign #16, so she went ahead and gave me #16 as well — on a slightly tighter deadline.

After that I was offered KING CONAN as a regular assignment, which I regrettably turned down. I really enjoyed **Conan**, but at the time I was concerned about maintaining my work at the animation studio and wanted to do only what I could without jeopardizing it. Then they offered me KA-ZAR. Then it became a decision for me, could I handle a monthly book and work at animation? I thought I probably could. And I was also afraid that if I didn't accept one of these jobs, Marvel would stop offering. So KA-ZAR was my first regular title for Marvel. Later, I did a fill-in for STAR WARS and wound up being awarded the STAR WARS series.

When I was doing KA-ZAR, I was able to do a **Spider-Man** guest appearance which was fantastic for me because I always wanted to do super heroes. That Ka-Zar/Spider-Man story was shown around and **Tom DeFalco** called to ask me if I was interested in doing MARVEL TEAM-UP. Though it doesn't appear like it, I was actually the regular artist on MARVEL TEAM-UP for a short period of time.

The MARVEL TEAM-UP stuff came and went fairly quickly. But it was enough, I guess, because it was shortly after Tom DeFalco handed the editorial reins of the Spider-Man books to **Danny Fingeroth** that I got the story "The Kid Who Collected Spider-Man" to draw.

A story that many people consider very memorable

It was very powerful. I was proud to be a part of it. This is a few years ago

now, and it's still one of the true high points in my career. And shortly after that story, I was offered THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

At first I was scared. I had been quoted earlier as saying that if they had offered me AMAZING tomorrow, I didn't think I would take it because I didn't feel that I was ready. But then what occurred to me was that if I didn't take it, who might they give it to? At least I know I'll be putting 150% into it because of my love for the character. So I took it. That was a major career decision for me. When Tom was my editor on TEAM-UP he had said, "Ron, at some point you're going to have to decide whether you want to remain in animation or do comics, because you can't fully realize the potential of either one if you're dividing yourself." So with AMAZING, I committed myself to comics 100%.

So what's it like working with Tom?

It's terrific! I consider him a good friend and a counselor. He's been like the slightly older brother that one really benefits from having. And the creative end of it is just a whole lot of fun. Tom and I have very similar views. What we want to do in our stories is recapture the sense of what the original Marvel Age of comics was all about. If you can open up the comics we did and feel that you're back in 1967 or something, then Tom and I feel that we've done our job.

***Ralph Macchio**, the editor of THOR, showed me the covers you had done and said that you were the one who made up the cover copy. It's very much in the sixties' tradition.*

Oh, yeah!

*You have been very influenced by **Jack Kirby**, **Steve Ditko**, and **John Buscema**. What is it about the sixties' Marvels that you like?*

I think it's partly from the frustration that I missed them! I very much would have loved being in on the ground floor at Marvel during this time. The creative energy there — to be a part of this flow of ideas would have been just fantastic. All you have to do is look at the characters that were created in that period.

A lot of people, nowadays, if you say to them "Spider-Man" — they think, "Spider-Man . . . oh, he's been around, there's nothing new to do with Spider-Man." And that's wrong. There's always something new there. I believe that there are no bad or worn-out characters. It's just the matter of finding the right team that will take that character, identify with it and make the character live. I don't care how long a character has been around. If the person and people working on that character still are excited about the character and what makes that character different, then it's going to

come across in the book.

With THOR, Tom, [inker] **Brett Breeding** and I had to do a few things to the series so that we could grab the character, hang onto him, and make him ours. But for the most part it was just recognizing what made Thor Thor — what makes him different, unique.

And what does?

What does? His relation to the mortal world. His is a completely alien perspective. A "godly" perspective. This guy is from an advanced race of demigods but he has this affinity for us mortals. He finds humans terrific — worthy of awe and honor

Do you plan to do less adventures of the gods on Asgard and more of Thor's activities on Earth?

Well, a combination of both. I think a lot of people were expecting, when they heard that Tom DeFalco and Ron Frenz and Brett Breeding, the old AMAZING SPIDER-MAN team, would be taking over THOR — that Thor would start having phobias, neuroses and all this sort of stuff because we did seem to relish doing the human side of **Peter Parker**.

We do want to re-establish Thor's ties with Earth. But at the same time we're also doing our slow build to our fantastic war of the gods, the Egyptian pantheon.

To do THOR and to ignore the cosmic aspects of it would be ridiculous One of the things that makes Thor different from Spider-Man is that you can't take a Thor story and tell it the same way you tell a Spider-Man story. You need the wider scope to do Thor stories — an epic scale. Yet we want Thor to have ties to Earth that are real. So through an expanded human supporting cast and some other things we'll be doing, we're going to go one step further than Thor's former mortal identity of Dr. Don Blake.

Would enhancing Thor's ties to Earth involve a new secret identity, or would that be telling?

That would be telling

*How does it feel coming onto THOR after **Walt Simonson** and **Sal Buscema's** run?*

We were in an awkward situation, because theirs was a very hard act to follow.

But I had followed Walt on STAR WARS, I had followed **Brent Anderson** on KA-ZAR, and I had followed **John Romita Jr.** on THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN. All you can do is the best you can do and hope that the readers like it.

What would you like to do in the future besides more THORs?

Whatever comes my way, really. At this point I'm not a creature who has a plan for his life mapped out. I'm very happy on THOR and with Marvel. If anything, I'll be concentrating even more on THOR and making sure we don't lose our momentum because we've got a lot of stories that we want to do

STAN'S SOAPBOX

SO WHAT DOES STAN LEE DO ANYWAY?

I don't know how other writers do it!

Most of 'em make it look so easy. I mean, whenever you read the Bullpen page in our mags, there's always a column by some editor or other and it reads as though he just dashed it off as easy as pie.

So what am I doing wrong?

Why do I have to sit here chewing a pencil, tapping on my computer keys, staring out the window, growling at my dog, scratching my head and cracking my knuckles as I vainly try to think of something to write?!!

And you know the worst part? It's trying to dream up the very first sentence!

Once that first sentence is written everything starts coming easier, sort of like a snowball rolling downhill. But that first push, that's the clinker! Here are a few first sentences I just can't settle for . . .

"Dear reader, it's nice to get together once again."

Yechhh! Or . . .

"I see a whole month has passed since my last column."

Ptuiii! Or . . .

"This is **Stan Lee**. I have some things to tell you."

Blechhh!

See what I mean? How do you start without sounding too stiff, or too formal, or just too plain dull?

Of course, there's one other way, a sneaky way. Naturally, that's the way ol' Stan just did it this time! You sort of slide into the column without an official opener, taking the reader unaware! I mean, here we are deep into this month's tete-a-tete and we haven't

even started yet! See all the sly little literary tricks you can learn as a result of our little get-togethers each ish?

And now, with all that gobbledegook out of the way, it's time to tackle the heavy stuff.

Last month, I clued you in to the rhapsodic reason why I've dubbed my column a "Soapbox." That was done in answer to all the True Believers who were staying awake nights agonizing over that little mystery.

Well, this time I'm about to perform another public service by answering the most oft-asked question in all your letters, namely: "What the heck do you actually DO out in California, Stan? We know you're headquartered at the animation studios of Marvel Productions, but what is it you DO there?"

The odds are that there are people right here at the studio who've been wondering the same thing, so I figure it's time to set the record straight. I'll answer frankly, honestly, without fear or favor, letting the chips fall where they may, 'cause that's the least you'd expect of me and that's the kind of guy I am! (And that's another great way to polish off an entire paragraph without really having said anything! Hope you've all been taking notes!)

Anyway, to end the suspense and alleviate the mounting tension which must be growing unbearable by now, here's the straight scoop on "Wither Lee, and why?" . . .

Here at the sun-kissed California studio of Marvel Productions (which I like to think of as "Marvel Comics West") my title is Vice-President of Creative Affairs. That means I'm in charge of all the creative stuff that our animation studio produces. Or, to translate it into simple, everyday English — whatever we can't blame on anyone else gets blamed on me! But I don't mind. I've got this great office with a genuine **Spider-Man** pinball machine and I've even got my very own parking spot right out front!

As for what I actually do — most of the time is spent working with the writers and artists who produce our animated cartoons, cartoons such as Spider-Man, **the Incredible Hulk**, and some newies that we'll have for you later this year — **The X-Men**, **Robocop**, **Commander Video**, **Captain America** and a few other surprises.

Y'know, it's really great. It's like I never left the Bullpen, because the artists and writers here at our west coast studio are the same kind of terrific, talented, fun-loving screwballs that you'll find back at our New York comic book haven. I guess the biggest difference is that in New York we're headquartered in a mini-skyscraper on Park Avenue South, while here in California we have our own sunny little two-story shack built around a garden atrium in the lovable little town of Van Nuys.

Perhaps the most crucially important part of my days occurs during our morning coffee break. I've recently organized one of the greatest athletic events of the century! It's called The Stan Lee 1-K Invitational Marvel Marathon! As soon as break time arrives, I gather our goofy group together and we set out on our world famous one-kilometer walking tour! Okay, I'll admit that one-kilometer isn't very far, but it's the spirit that counts! I've even written our own official Marvel Marathon Marching Song, and if you behave yourselves, I might just print it here in some future column — although you'll have to promise never to reveal its momentous message to any potential DC defector!

But, getting back to my own awesomely astonishing activities here in the land of movie magic, mirth and make-believe, things have been more exciting than ever now that the wondrous wizards of New World have made mighty Marvel a part of their motion picture and TV empire!

I devote a large part of each day to working with the New World production executives on the various movie projects which involve our Marvel characters. Once again, it's like being back in the blushin' Bullpen, except that instead of discussing comic book stories and artwork with **Tom DeFalco's** torrid team, I discuss movie and television scripts with the screenwriters and directors who are helping to make New World the fastest-growing production entity of all!

And y'know one of the most gratifying things I've learned? Practically all of the brilliant young screenwriters and directors with whom I work are — you guessed it — rabid Marvel comic book fans! They grew up on Marvel! They were Marvel fanatics! They still read Marvel every chance they get! Hey, it's like I never left home!

And don't think for one single second that I've turned my back on the greatest, goofiest gang of geniuses I've ever known! A week doesn't go by when I don't phone the New York Bullpen and chew the ears off anyone who'll listen with my cogent little comments and bright-eyed banter. Then, every few days a new shipment of comics arrives, and I've gotta pore through them fast before the rest of the studio can get their grubby little hands on 'em! I tell ya, it's like a side of beef thrown to the lions at a zoo — it's devoured before you can blink your eye! If there's anyone anywhere who doesn't love Marvel, he's done a pretty good job of hiding from me!

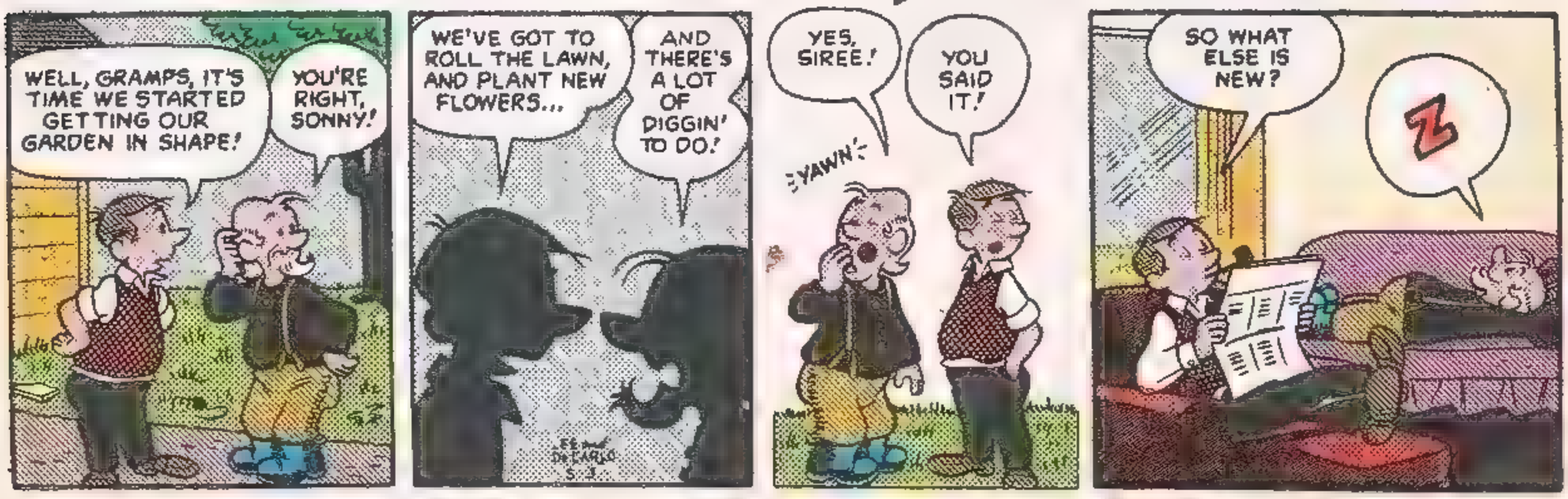
Well, I'd better get off this sentimental kick before we all grow too misty-eyed to read any further. Besides, if I make my job sound too appealing, the first thing you know other people will start applying for it and they're liable to turn me loose and make me work for a living!

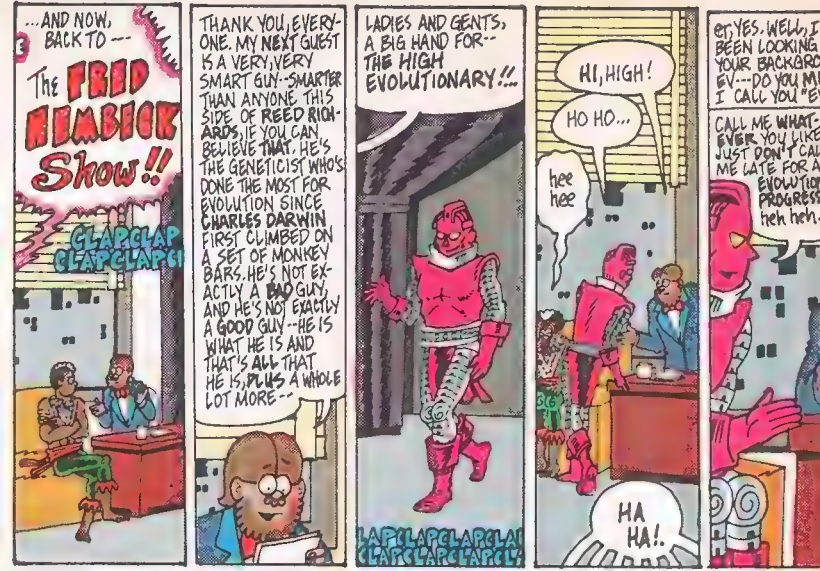
So, till we meet again next ish, keep thy webs untangled, take a toad to tea, and before you go to sleep, remember to ask yourself — it's ten o'clock, do you know where your comic books are?

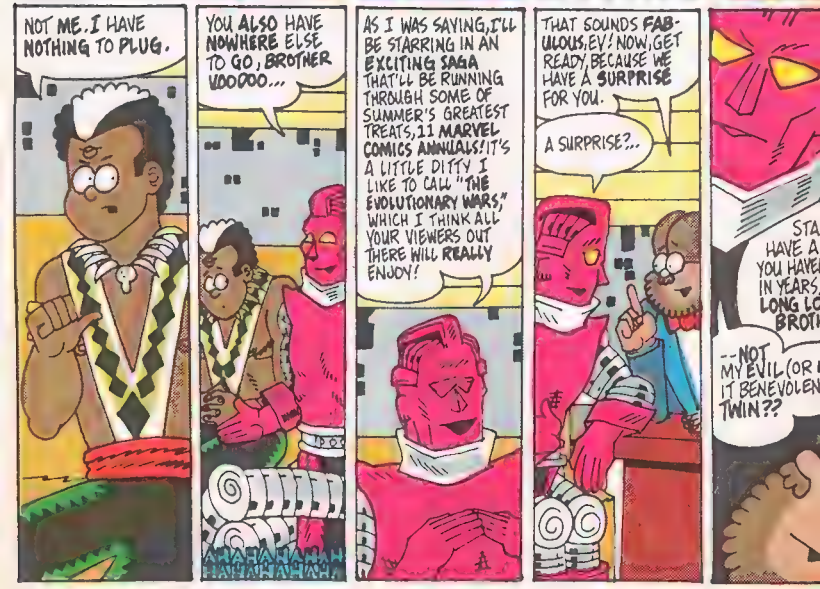
Excelsior!

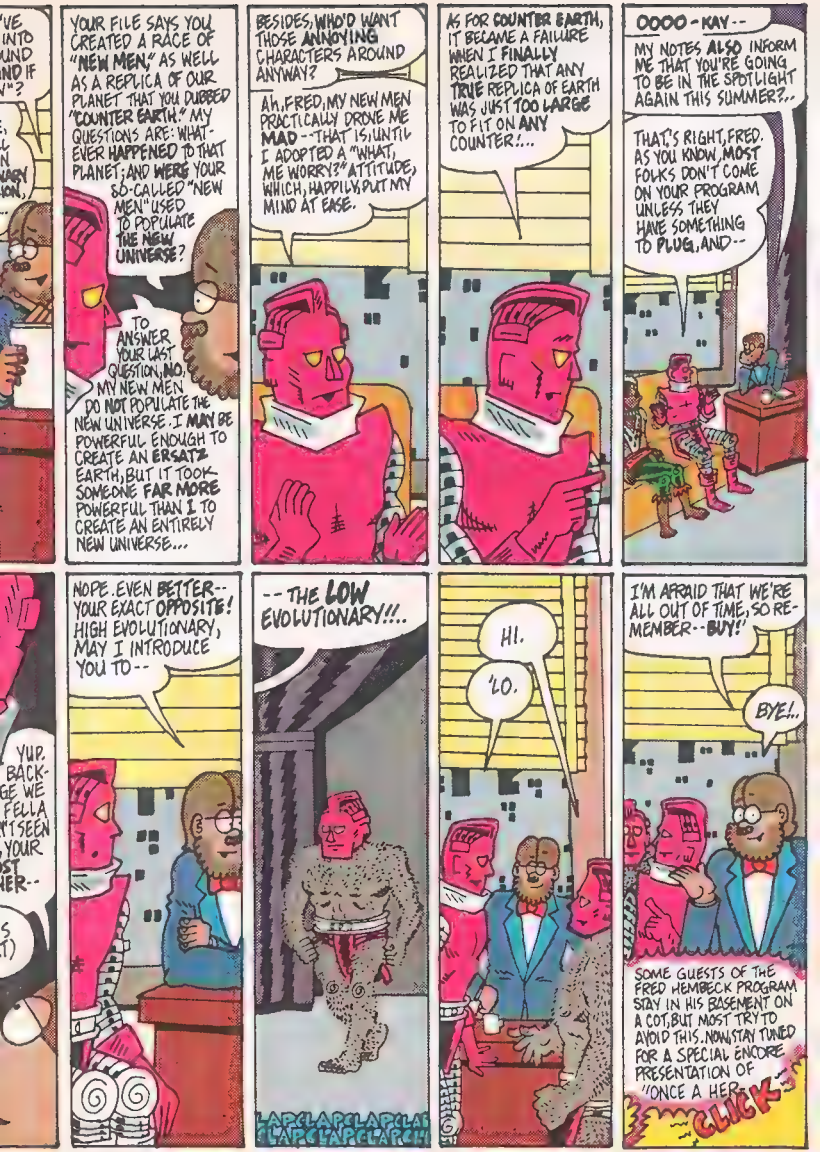
Stan

WILLIE LUMPKIN © 1988 by Stan Lee and Dan DeCarlo


WELL, GRAMPS, IT'S TIME WE STARTED GETTING OUR GARDEN IN SHAPE!
YOU'RE RIGHT, SONNY!
WE'VE GOT TO ROLL THE LAWN, AND PLANT NEW FLOWERS...
AND THERE'S A LOT OF DIGGIN' TO DO!
YES, SIREE!
YOU SAID IT!
YAWN
SO WHAT ELSE IS NEW?
Z


...AND NOW, BACK TO --
The FRED HEMBECK Show!!
CLAPCLAP CLAPCLAPCL
THANK YOU, EVERYONE. MY NEXT GUEST IS A VERY, VERY SMART GUY--SMARTER THAN ANYONE THIS SIDE OF REED RICHARDS, IF YOU CAN BELIEVE THAT. HE'S THE GENETICIST WHO'S DONE THE MOST FOR EVOLUTION SINCE CHARLES DARWIN FIRST CLIMBED ON A SET OF MONKEY BARS. HE'S NOT EXACTLY A BAD GUY, AND HE'S NOT EXACTLY A GOOD GUY--HE IS WHAT HE IS AND THAT'S ALL THAT HE IS, PLUS A WHOLE LOT MORE--
LADIES AND GENTS, A BIG HAND FOR-- THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY!!!
APCLAPCLAPCLAPCLA CLAPCLAPCLAPCL!
HI, HIGH!
HO HO...
hee hee
HA HA!
er, YES. WELL, I BEEN LOOKING YOUR BACKGRO EV---DO YOU MI I CALL YOU "E
CALL ME WHAT- EVER YOU LIKE JUST DON'T CAL ME LATE FOR A EVOLUTION PROGRESS heh heh.

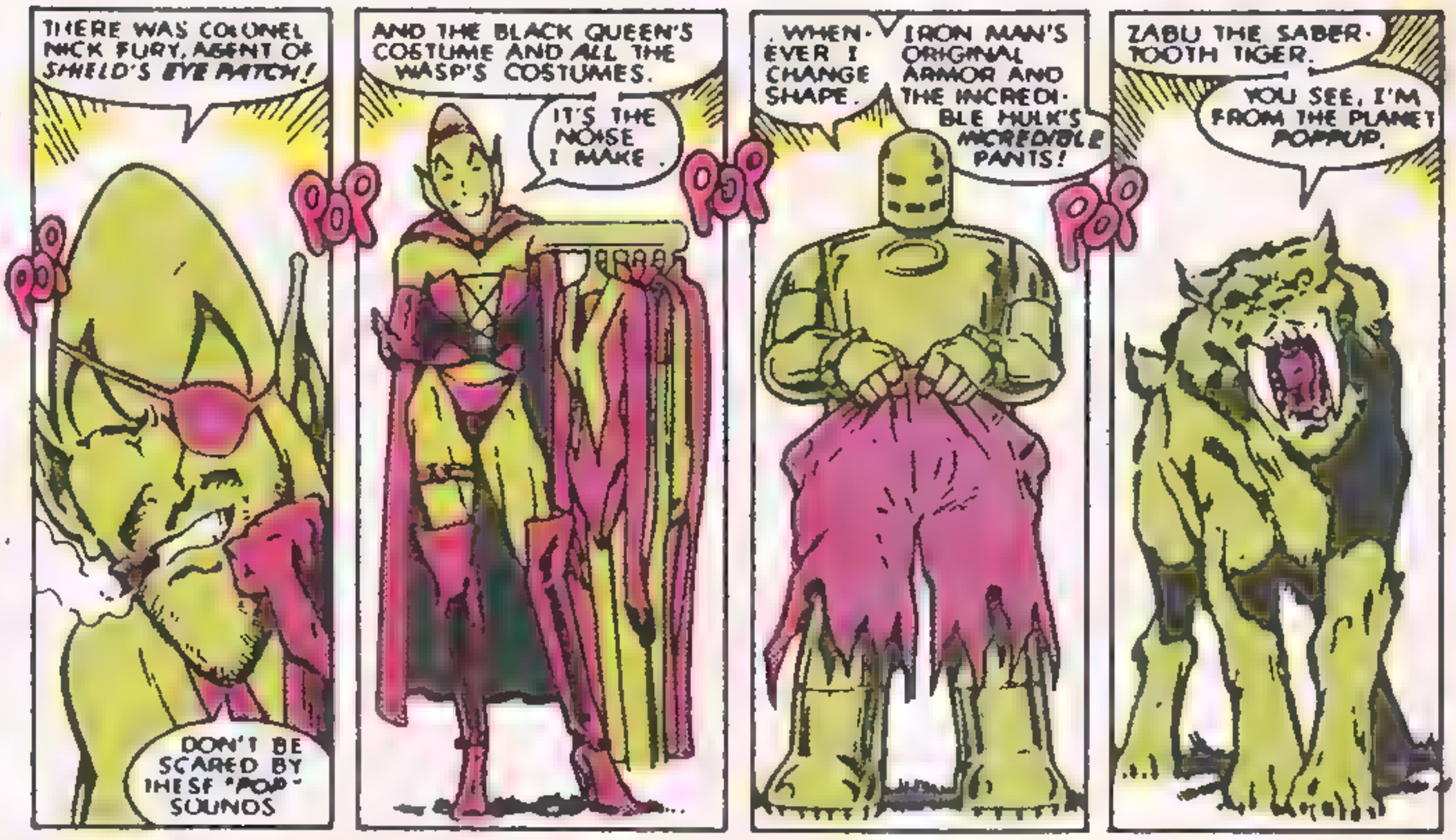

NOT ME. I HAVE NOTHING TO PLUG.
YOU ALSO HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO GO, BROTHER VOOOOO...
AHAHAHAHAH HAHAHAHAH!
AS I WAS SAYING, I'LL BE STARRING IN AN EXCITING SAGA THAT'LL BE RUNNING THROUGH SOME OF SUMMER'S GREATEST TREATS, 11 MARVEL COMICS ANNUALS! IT'S A LITTLE DITTY I LIKE TO CALL "THE EVOLUTIONARY WARS," WHICH I THINK ALL YOUR VIEWERS OUT THERE WILL REALLY ENJOY!
THAT SOUNDS FABULOUS, EV! NOW, GET READY BECAUSE WE HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU.
A SURPRISE?..
STA HAVE A YOU HAVE IN YEARS, LONG LO BROT
--NOT MY EVIL (OR I IT BENEVOLEN TWIN??


YOUR FILE SAYS YOU CREATED A RACE OF "NEW MEN," AS WELL AS A REPLICA OF OUR PLANET THAT YOU DUBBED "COUNTER EARTH." MY QUESTIONS ARE: WHAT-EVER HAPPENED TO THAT PLANET; AND WERE YOUR SO-CALLED "NEW MEN" USED TO POPULATE THE NEW UNIVERSE?
TO ANSWER YOUR LAST QUESTION, NO. MY NEW MEN DO NOT POPULATE THE NEW UNIVERSE. I MAY BE POWERFUL ENOUGH TO CREATE AN ERSATZ EARTH, BUT IT TOOK SOMEONE FAR MORE POWERFUL THAN I TO CREATE AN ENTIRELY NEW UNIVERSE...
BESIDES, WHO'D WANT THOSE ANNOYING CHARACTERS AROUND ANYWAY?
AH, FRED, MY NEW MEN PRACTICALLY DROVE ME MAD -- THAT IS, UNTIL I ADOPTED A "WHAT, ME WORRY?" ATTITUDE, WHICH, HAPPILY, PUT MY MIND AT EASE.
AS FOR COUNTER EARTH, IT BECAME A FAILURE WHEN I FINALLY REALIZED THAT ANY TRUE REPLICA OF EARTH WAS JUST TOO LARGE TO FIT ON ANY COUNTER!...
OOOO - KAY --
MY NOTES ALSO INFORM ME THAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE IN THE SPOTLIGHT AGAIN THIS SUMMER?..
THAT'S RIGHT, FRED. AS YOU KNOW, MOST FOLKS DON'T COME ON YOUR PROGRAM UNLESS THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO PLUG, AND --
YUP. BACK-GE WE FELLA 'VE SEEN YOUR ST ER--
NOPE. EVEN BETTER -- YOUR EXACT OPPOSITE! HIGH EVOLUTIONARY, MAY I INTRODUCE YOU TO --
-- THE LOW EVOLUTIONARY!!!..
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP!
HI.
'LO.
I'M AFRAID THAT WE'RE ALL OUT OF TIME, SO RE-MEMBER -- BUY!"
BYE!..
SOME GUESTS OF THE FRED HEMBECK PROGRAM STAY IN HIS BASEMENT ON A COT, BUT MOST TRY TO AVOID THIS. NOW STAY TUNED FOR A SPECIAL ENCORE PRESENTATION OF "ONCE A HER-
CLICK

MARVEL® TRIVIA QUIZ

While we await more of that Annual magic, as it's being previewed elsewhere in this issue, let's stroll down memory lane with twenty trivia teasers culled from the history of Marvel Annuals. As ever, questions regarding recent Marvel history are first, questions concerning ancient Marvel lore later, and all the answers at the back of the book. Enjoy!

—Brian Nelson


THERE WAS COLONEL NICK FURY, AGENT OF SHIELD'S EYE PATCH!
POP
POP
DON'T BE SCARED BY THESE "POP" SOUNDS
AND THE BLACK QUEEN'S COSTUME AND ALL THE WASP'S COSTUMES.
IT'S THE NOISE I MAKE.
POP
WHEN-EVER I CHANGE SHAPE.
IRON MAN'S ORIGINAL ARMOR AND THE INCREDI-BLE HULK'S INCREDIBLE PANTS!
POP
ZABU THE SABER-TOOTH TIGER.
YOU SEE, I'M FROM THE PLANET POPPUP.

1. *In last summer's AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL, who arranged for the* **Parkers'** wedding reception?
   A) **May Parker**
   B) **Mrs. Watson**
   C) **J.J.J.** and the *Bugle*
   D) **Hembeck** Catering

2. Which of the following deceased characters was NOT resurrected for battle against the **Avengers** in last year's Annual?
   A) **Bucky Barnes**
   B) **Warlock**
   C) **The Red Guardian**
   D) **Dracula**

3. What New Universe character debuted in the first D P 7 Annual?
   A) **Col. Browning**
   B) **The Witness**
   C) **Indigo**
   D) **Mark Gruenwald**

4. **Power Pack** and the **Inhumans** guest-starred in whose 1987 Annual?
   A) **X-Factor**
   B) **X-Men**
   C) **New Mutants**
   D) **Groo the Wanderer**

5. What team was attacked by a supposedly dead antagonist in their first Annual?
   A) **The Defenders**
   B) **The West Coast Avengers**
   C) **Alpha Flight**
   D) **New Mutants**

6. **Future Max** appeared in an annual of which series?
   A) WEB OF SPIDER MAN
   B) AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
   C) PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN
   D) MARVEL TEAM-UP

7. What normally masculine **Squadron Sinister** member was personified by a woman in AVENGERS ANNUAL #8?
   A) **Hyperion**
   B) **Nighthawk**
   C) **Dr. Spectrum**
   D) **Tom Thumb**

8. All of the following characters had their origins recounted in Annuals of THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, *except*
   A) **Captain Marvel**
   B) **The Punisher**
   C) **The Human Fly**
   D) **Iron Man of 2020**

9. **Arkon, the Impossible Man**, and the **Badoon** all provided excitement in the various annuals of what title?
   A) FANTASTIC FOUR
   B) X-MEN
   C) MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE
   D) MY LOVE

10. Which of the following characters did not debut in an Annual—
   A) **Mary Jane Watson**
   B) **Lila Cheney**
   C) **Franklin Richards**
   D) **Rapier**

11. Who did the X-Men and Spider-Man join to battle in the first MARVEL TEAM-UP ANNUAL?
   A) **The Lords of Light and Darkness**
   B) **Morbius**
   C) **Warhawk**
   D) **Sha Shan**

12. **Howard the Duck's** only annual, as witnessed by its title, took place in what exotic locale?
   A) Therea
   B) Bagdad
   C) Bagmom
   D) Cleveland

13. Which character debuted, although in a radically different form, in an INCREDIBLE HULK ANNUAL?
   A) **Him**
   B) **Her**
   C) **It**
   D) **Them**

14. What team was paired with **Ben Grimm** for the first MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ANNUAL?
   A) **The Super-Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.**
   B) **The Rangers**
   C) **The Liberty Legion**
   D) **Patsy** and **Hedy**

15. What character's annual witnessed the introduction of a new, but short-lived, **Brotherhood of Evil Mutants**?
   A) CAPTAIN AMERICA
   B) DAREDEVIL
   C) POWER MAN
   D) SGT. FURY

16. What team's annual pitted them against a bunch of **Bozos**?
   A) CHAMPIONS
   B) POWER MAN AND IRON FIST
   C) DEFENDERS
   D) THE LEGION OF MONSTERS

17. AVENGERS #71 was a crossover with which Annual, released eight years later?
   A) AVENGERS ANNUAL #6
   B) THOR ANNUAL #5
   C) INVADERS ANNUAL #1
   D) TOWER OF SHADOWS ANNUAL #1

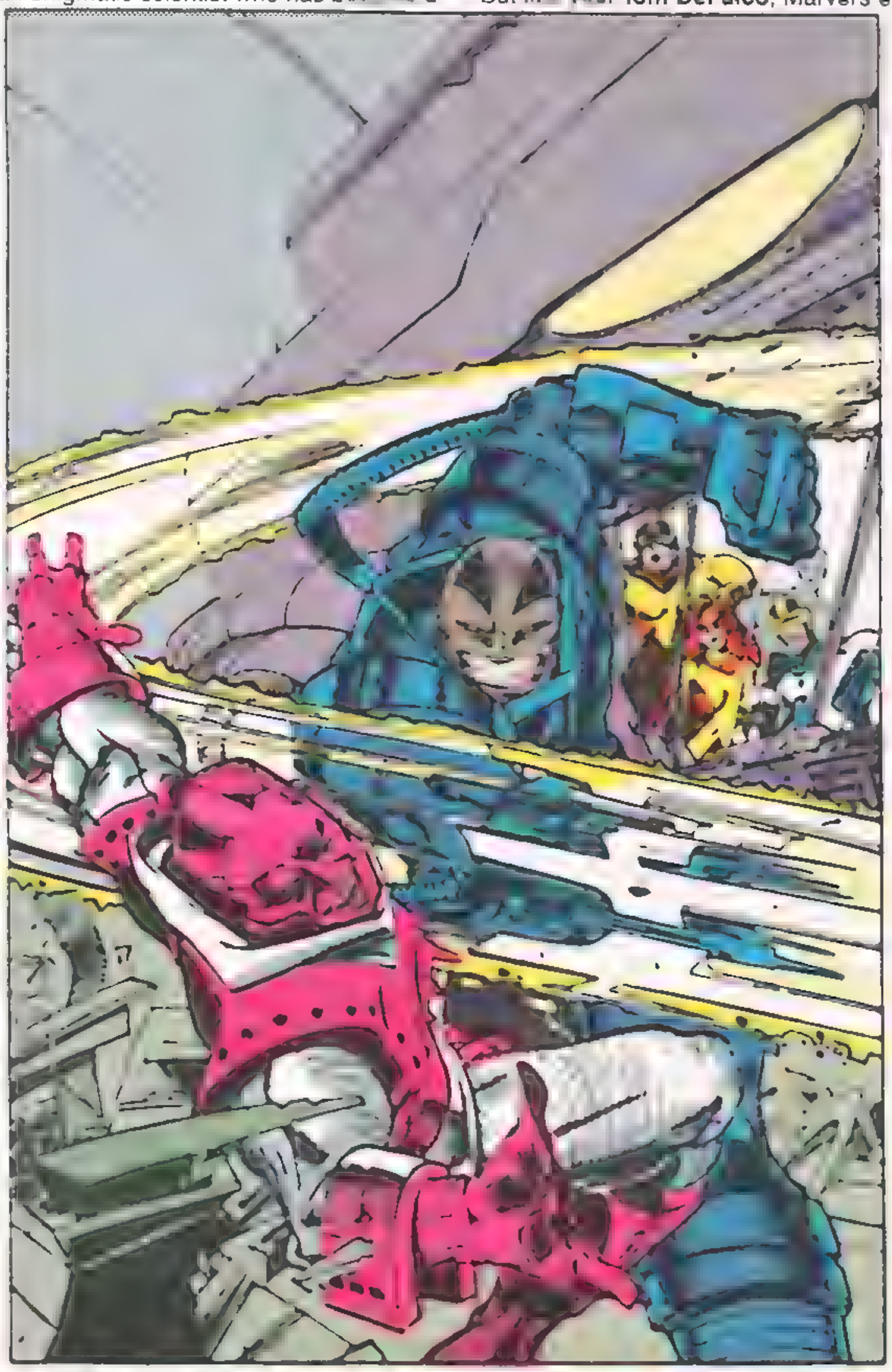
18. In one of the major Annuals of the late 60s, the **Arranger** and the **Red Skull** set up what characters for death?
   A) **Richard** and **Mary Parker**
   B) **Mr.** and **Mrs. Warren Worthington II**
   C) The original **Human Torch** and **Toro**
   D) **Mr.** and **Mrs. Willie Lumpkin**

19. Who set the 1968 Avengers against the 1963 team, in the second AVENGERS ANNUAL?
   A) **The Scarlet Centurion**
   B) **The Grandmaster**
   C) **The High Evolutionary**
   D) **Dan Rather** and CBS News

20. **Hercules** was introduced in the first Annual of what title?
   A) THOR
   B) FANTASTIC FOUR
   C) IRON MAN
   D) JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY

SUPER-SIZED ANNUAL

Imagine a story that ranges over the entire world, from major cities to South American jungles, from the mountainous home of immortal superhumans to the dim caverns of nearly mindless humanoids, and even to the moon, involving costumed super heroes, men turned into monsters, and men and women raised to the level of godhood. And at the center of it all is an enigmatic scientist who has become a god himself, who plans to change the very course of humanity's evolutionary path. This is the story of "The Evolutionary War," the saga that will span all of the 1988 annuals set in the Marvel Universe.



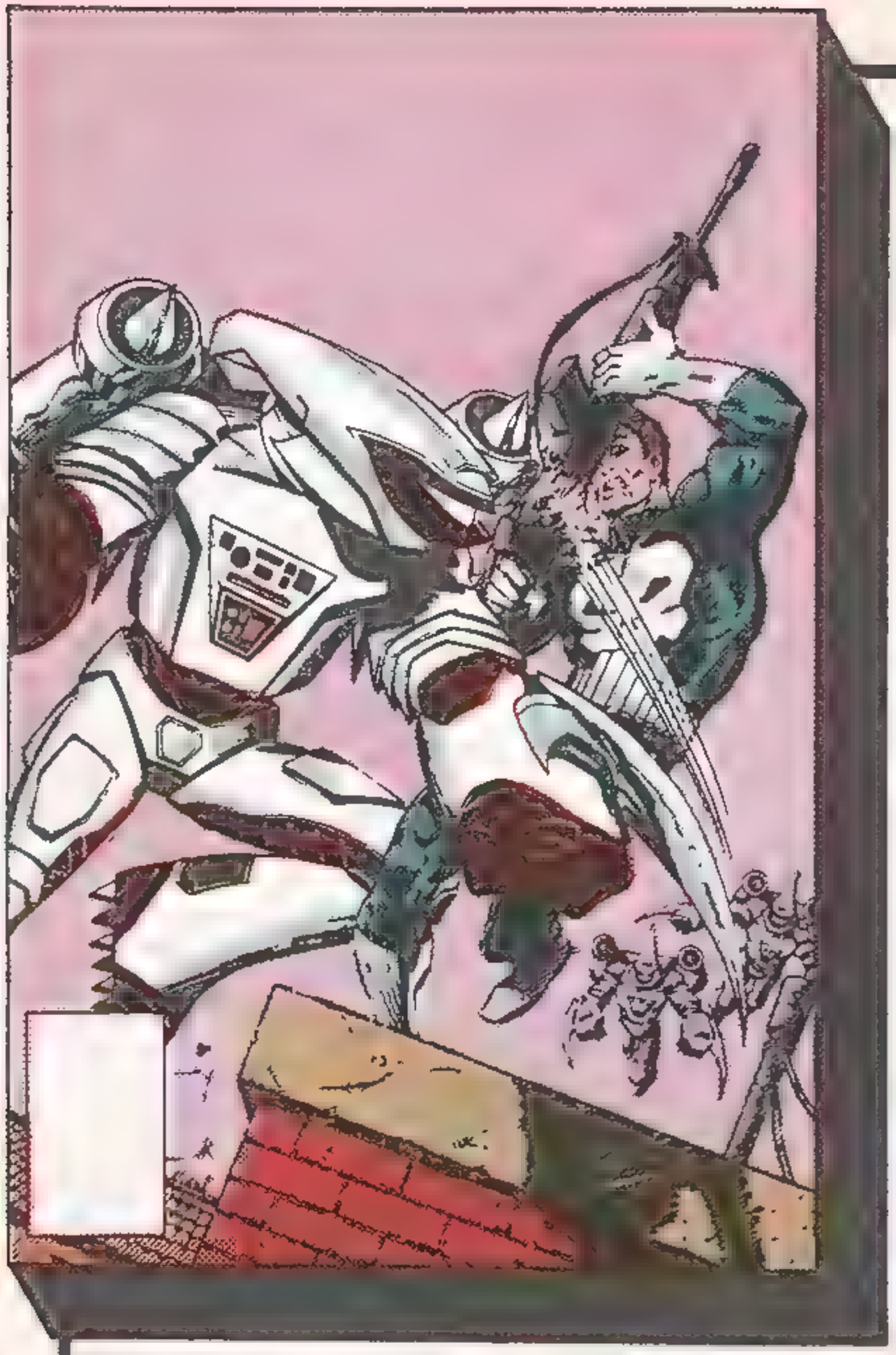
The figure at the center of the Evolutionary War is the **High Evolutionary**, a character created by Marvel founding fathers **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby** for an issue of THOR over twenty years ago. The High Evolutionary was a scientist who discovered a means of accelerating the evolution of living beings. Using his methods on animals, he created his **New Men**, beasts who thought, spoke, and walked like human beings, whom he organized into the chivalric order of **the Knights of Wundagore**. Eventually the High Evolutionary turned his process upon himself, and reached what he claimed to be the ultimate end of human evolution, becoming a non-corporeal, godlike being of immense power. Yet for reasons that remain unknown, the High Evolutionary forsook his new form and returned to that of a human being, while retaining so much power that he was able to create a duplicate of Earth, populated by its own human race, and was even able to contend against the planet-devouring menace of **Galactus** himself. Still later, seized by suicidal urges, the High Evolutionary devolved himself into formless protoplasm. Until now, that seemed to be the end of the High Evolutionary's history.

But last year **Tom DeFalco**, Marvel's editor in chief who had recently taken on the assignment of writing THOR, Marvel executive editor **Mark Gruenwald**, THOR editor **Ralph Macchio**, and his assistant **Marc Siry** had a luncheon meeting to discuss upcoming storylines for the series. Someone — no one remembers who at this point — suggested bringing back the High Evolutionary.

This idea had immediate appeal for Ralph. "What originally started me thinking about using the High Evolutionary in THOR," Ralph says, "was that here was a guy who had supposedly evolved to the ultimate end of human evolution and then came back. I found that fascinating. What went through his head? Why did he come back? Was he bored with it? Was it too much for him to take?"

Moreover, Ralph, like Mark and Tom, is a great admirer of the classic Lee and Kirby stories of the 1960s. "Around the time Lee and Kirby did the High Evolutionary in THOR, they had stuff like the Rigellian **Colonizers**, the Troll War, and **Ego the Living Planet** in the book, too. THOR took a bit of a back seat to THE FANTASTIC FOUR, which had characters like Galactus, but the things that were going on in

THE EVOLUTIONARY WAR



THOR then were certainly no less fantastic, and the High Evolutionary was one of them.

"I was trying to find a major villain for THOR, someone who would be a huge, overwhelming presence behind the scenes, who would, in effect, create a bunch of new gods. I was fascinated by the idea of what would happen if you genetically accelerated a god. What would you get — Super-god? So the High Evolutionary was going to be behind the scenes for a long time in THOR, involved in a lot of machinations, pulling a lot of strings. Then he was going to send out agents to get cell samples from Thor and possibly other Asgardians," the High Evolutionary would clone new, genetically altered beings from them, "and we would get a bunch of artificially created gods."

In fact, **the Mongoose**, who recently debuted in THOR, is one of the High Evolutionary's New Men, and is out to steal a sample of Thor's cells for his master, the High Evolutionary. But the THOR storyline that Tom and Ralph intended to do with the High Evolutionary expanded into something much bigger

MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE editor **Jim Salicrup** suggested at one of the editorial creative meetings that in 1988 all of the Marvel annuals set in the Marvel Universe could be tied together by one overall storyline. Some annuals had crossed over with each other before, such as last year's AVENGERS and WEST COAST AVENGERS annuals, but never before had an entire line of annuals been linked together in this way. "So," Mark Gruenwald recalls, "we were casting about for somone in the Marvel Universe who would be a great enough threat to necessitate the involvement of all the characters in the various annuals The High Evolutionary was one of the top contenders." So it was decided that the High Evolutionary would be the subject of this massive crossover rather than being used primarily in THOR

There was a "steering committee" that included Tom, Mark, and Ralph that worked out the basic overall premise of what Jim Salicrup dubbed "The Evolutionary War" and came up with ways in which the war might involve the various heroes. Mark wrote up the memo that defined the High Evolutionary's purposes and motives, outlined the structure of the High Evolutionary's organization of underlings, and set out what each annual was to accomplish in its story. The various writers, artists, and editors used the memo as a springboard for the actual stories, sometimes modifying and often expanding upon Mark's ideas for them. Mark is the overall coordinator of the "Evolutionary War" stories, making sure each annual is consistent with the others.

As for just what the High Evolutionary is up to, Mark explains that the High Evolutionary has read the various portents of mankind's history and genetic destiny and believes that this is the critical threshold in which the course of mankind's future evolution will be set. The rapid increase in the number of superhuman mutants in the last decade was one sign that this is a critical period in mankind's evolution; the arrival of the alien **Celestials** to observe humanity's progress was another. "He has been to the end of human evolution; he has evolved as far as the human genes can. Though he knows that humanity can go evolutionally further than the **Kree** or the **Skrulls**" — the Marvel Universe's most notorious imperial alien races — "there's still a limit. And he wants to push that limit. He wants mankind to become better than what he was able to become himself, and now is the time to do it. If he doesn't do it in this critical time period, it will be too late. Mankind's destiny millions of years from now will be affected by what is going on today. So he wants someone — like himself — to guide mankind so that it will go evolutionally further than it would naturally."

But, focused on his vision of humanity's ultimate destiny, the High Evolutionary pays little attention to the fate of individuals, and his methods of "helping" the human race will wreak considerable havoc. Nor is the High Evolutionary going to ask mankind whether or not they want his "help." He recruits human beings to serve him in one of four capacities: as **Gatherers**, **Eliminators**, **Purifiers**, or **Technicians**. The Gatherers are to collect information on the genetic makeup of various individuals, human and otherwise, even if they have to capture those individuals to do it. The Eliminators are out to destroy things that could adversely affect people's genetic makeup; such as narcotics The Purifiers are sent to sterilize individuals whose genetic makeup is considered harmful to the human gene pool by the High Evolutionary. In other words, the High Evolutionary has taken it upon himself to decide who should have children and who should not. Even normal-looking human beings will be subjected to sterilization by the Purifiers. Also, Purifiers will be sent to remove the super-powers of mutants whom the High Evolutionary considers to be sufficiently dangerous. Finally, the Technicians will work to construct a "genetic bomb" with which the High Evolutionary intends to turn the entire human race into mutants

Mark Gruenwald emphasizes that the High Evolutionary is not a villain in the usual sense of the word, but that he is "misguided" in the opinions of the various heroes who will oppose him. Ralph adds that "The High Evolutionary isn't evil in the sense that **Doctor Doom** is, but with his power, which is godlike, and his attempts to show us the way things should be, he's like a government that tries to do everything for you. It gets so powerful and out of hand after awhile that you're left with nothing to do and you become less than man. In a way, by relieving us of the duty to evolve ourselves and doing it more quickly and artificially, the High Evolutionary is dealing a severe blow to mankind."

Mark admits, "One of the problems we had while we were developing the idea was we'd heard of an Unnamed Rival Limited Series in which evolution was apparently part of the storyline." This rival series came out first, and Mark is satisfied that "The Evolutionary War" is distinctly different from it in its treatment of the theme of evolution. Also, he notes that Marvel has used evolution as a theme repeatedly over the last quarter-century, ranging from the **Young Gods** in THOR #300 back to the treatment of **Rick Jones's** latent powers at the end of the Kree-Skrull War in THE AVENGERS and all the way back to what he calls "the underlying theme of X-MEN #1," the evolving of superhumans among us.

But why do "The Evolutionary War" as a series of annuals? Why doesn't it follow the recent custom in comics of being a Limited Series with crossovers into the regular titles? "It's our belief that the massive crossover Limited Series has been done to death and the public is tired of it," Mark states. "So we wanted to do a big event, but do it in such a way that you did not have to read forty-six different books in a certain order to follow the story. This one will be eleven books only. Except for the last one, the AVENGERS ANNUAL, you can read them in almost any order, because they're self-contained. We're trying to get the best of both worlds, to satisfy both those people who want to read a mega-story, an epic, and people who, say, just want to buy a PUNISHER ANNUAL because they like **the Punisher**."

Moreover, "The Evolutionary War" is being done in the Annuals in an attempt to restore them to a special position. "We're trying to get back to the Big Event concept in the early FANTASTIC FOUR and AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUALS, in which really big things happened," Mark says, pointing out that in the first six FF Annuals, **the Sub-Mariner** was reunited with the Atlantean people, we learned Dr. Doom's full origin, **Reed Richards** married **Sue Storm**, the original **Human Torch** (who is now **the Vision**) returned for the first time since the 1950s, it was revealed that Sue was pregnant, and in the following annual Sue gave birth. This year's annuals will be "super-size," with a full sixty-four pages, and many will have back-up stories and even pinups. Each will also bear an "Evolutionary War" logo on the cover.

Also, "The Evolutionary War" will serve as a grand tour of the Earth of the Marvel Universe, visiting its most amazing settings. "Theres been such an emphasis on destruction these days in comics," Mark says, "that we wanted to embrace all of those places that are unique to the Marvel Universe, like Subterranea, Wakanda, Olympia, Attilan, the Savage Land, and the Nexus of Realities in **Man-Thing's** swamp. .

"And as part of the Big Event we wanted to create some new things and refurbish and redefine some old things." In fact, two brand new heroes will make their first appearances in the course of "The Evolutionary War."

THE LINE-UP

X-FACTOR™

First comes X-FACTOR ANNUAL #3, whose main story is written by **Louise Simonson**, penciled by **Terry Shoemaker** (whose work was seen in the recent SPELLBOUND Limited Series), and inked by **Al Milgrom**. This story takes the Evolutionary War to Subterranea, the world of caverns and tunnels beneath the Earth's surface, much of it was ruled by the villainous **Mole Man** and **Tyrannus**. Now both of those villains have disappeared, and their servants, the humanoids known as **the Subterraneans**, have been left to fend for themselves.

"The High Evolutionary has decided that the Subterraneans are a dead end race," Louise Simonson explains, "and that they might as well be wiped out." So he sends two Purifiers, **Dr. Stack** and **Major Purge**, to sterilize the race. "Both of them are very enthusiastic about their work," Louise says. "They're total Nazi-type rotters."

One of the Subterraneans, **Val-Or**, develops extremely strong telepathic powers. Since most Subterraneans are unable to talk, Val-Or's power is a very valuable one, for he can make it possible for the members of his race to communicate with each other mentally

The archvillain of the series, **Apocalypse**, learns of Val-Or and decides this Subterranean might be useful to him Moreover, Louise says, Apocalypse thinks "that the High Evolutionary and his Purifiers are going too far in messing with things, and maybe he'd better have a discussion with the High Evolutionary about what's going on. So they have a discussion in the usual super-villain manner: fist against fist, power against power." We shall see in this battle that Apocalypse can summon enough power to challenge even the High Evolutionary's godlike might.

The telepathic Subterranean at one point lets out a scream of terror that is mentally "heard" by telepaths all over the world, including **X-Factor's** own **Marvel Girl**, **Jean Grey**, who has not had a telepathic contact since losing her own telepathic abilities. X-Factor goes to investigate and comes into conflict with Dr. Stack and Major Purge.

The back-up feature will chronicle the changes in the lives of the members of X-Factor ever since their early days in the original **X-Men**.

the PUNISHER™

Next comes the very first PUNISHER ANNUAL, written by **Mike Baron**, penciled by **Mark Texiera**, and inked by **Scott Williams**. Its editor, **Carl Potts**, states that "The PUNISHER ANNUAL is the first view the readers will get of the High Evolutionary's high-tech Eliminators. You'll see just how fearsome they are and how difficult it is to deal with them." But deal with them the Punisher must, as the Eliminators wipe out drug fields in South America in an attempt to eradicate drugs the High Evolutionary regards as genetic pollutants. Which side will the Punisher take in this warfare?

Steve Englehart is writing more of the "Evolutionary War" annuals than anyone else. (Runner-up is Louise Simonson, with two of the annuals to her credit.) Of course, Steve was the writer of that Certain Limited Series at the Distinguished Competition that also dealt with evolution. "There's enough of a distinction in my head between what the High Evolutionary is up to and what **the Guardians** are up to that I don't feel I'm repeating myself or doing the same thing over," Steve says. "All I can say is, thank God I'm prolific!"

SILVER SURFER™

The first of the three annuals Steve is writing is the very first SILVER SURFER ANNUAL. In the thirty-page lead feature, **the Surfer** heads for Earth to try to find the son of Mantis. "But on his way to Earth," Steve says, "he finds the Van Allen Radiation Belt in flux." This is the work of the alien Skrulls, who are attempting to resurrect **the Super-Skrull**, who, when last seen in ALPHA FLIGHT, was reduced to atoms and projected into the belt. The Skrulls succeed in reviving the Super-Skrull, cured of the cancer that had been killing him. Because he had been reduced to atoms when the rest of the Skrull race lost their shape-changing powers, the Super-Skrull still possesses those powers, as well as the superhuman abilities of the original members of the Fantastic Four. Soon the Super-Skrull clashes with the Surfer.

But both of them have other problems. "The High Evolutionary has already contacted **the Eternals**," Steve reports, "because he wants them to map the Surfer's DNA." In this way the High Evolutionary can study the Surfer's own genetic structure. So the Eternals, that race of virtually immortal, superhuman beings (who will soon return once more in their own series in Marvel's forthcoming anthology series, MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS), end up trying to capture both the Surfer and the Super-Skrull. Mark Gruenwald points out that this annual will be the first meeting between the Silver Surfer and the Eternals, all cosmic characters first depicted in Marvel Comics by the legendary Jack Kirby.

The SURFER annual will have two back-ups. The first focuses on **Nova**, the herald of the world-devouring Galactus, who returns to her master to find him dying. This course of events will set up a new storyline in the Surfer's regular series. The subject of the second back-up story is a secret, but it will have ramifications for the future of another Englehart-written series, THE WEST COAST AVENGERS "Lately there's been more and more cross-fertilization among my three Marvel series," Steve says. "The three series are all a little more inteconnected than usual this summer."

the new MUTANTS™

Next up is NEW MUTANTS ANNUAL #4, in which Louise Simonson returns to the Evolutionary War as writer, joined by penciler **June Brigman** and inker **Bob McLeod**. "The High Evolutionary has decided that there are certain mutants whose powers are dangerous to humanity," Louise says, "and he has decided that these mutants should have their powers removed." Former New Mutant **Magma** throws a temper tantrum using her powers in her native city of Nova Roma, the outpost of ancient Roman civilization that still exists in the Amazon jungle. The High Evolutionary's forces go kidnap her to remove her powers. The New Mutants learn about her abduction and go off to rescue her themselves. In the course of the story two familiar mutants will lose their powers and one New Mutants' powers will be radically affected.

the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN®

Then comes AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #22, written by Tom DeFalco, penciled by **Mark Bagley**, and featuring the introduction of the first of the brand new heroes to show up in the Evolutionary War. This is **Robbie Baldwin**, a student at Springdale Central High School, who, due to an accident in a scientific experiment, receives the super-powers that turn him into **Speedball, the Masked**

Marvel. Two weeks before this annual comes out, Speedball will debut in his own regular comic, to be plotted and drawn by another Marvel legend, **Steve Ditko**, co-creator of **Spider-Man** and **Dr. Strange**, and scripted by **Roger Stern**. Roger explains that Speedball can amplify kinetic energy in such a way that "if something hits him, he can rebound away from it." But his power is not merely defensive: "He can bounce around and slam into an opponent without getting himself hurt," states Roger. Mark Gruenwald sees Speedball as a new character in the classic tradition of the great Marvel series of the 1960s.

In the annual the **Kingpin of Crime** tries to find out who is behind the massive destruction of illegal drugs. Of course, the culprits are the Eliminators, but now there are Purifiers in New York City sterilizing members of the local citizenry. **Daredevil** becomes involved in the goings-on as well as Spider-Man, whose entanglement with the Evolutionary War will last into two other annuals.

FANTASTIC FOUR.

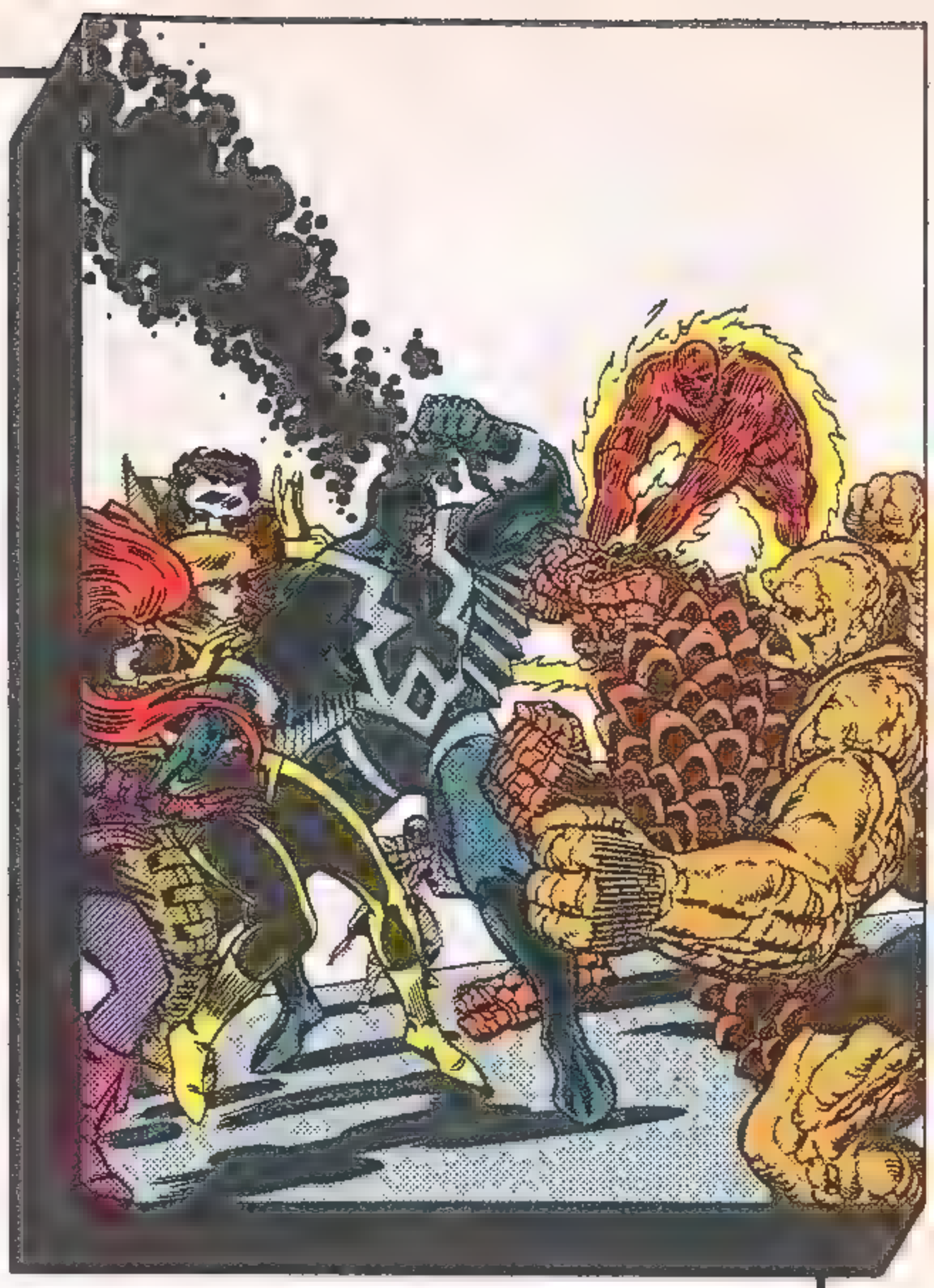
Currently, the Fantastic Four consists of **the Thing**, **the Human Torch**, **Ms. Marvel**, and **Crystal**, a member of the strange race called **the Inhumans**, who dwell in the city of Attilan on the moon. Crystal was married to the mutant **Quicksilver**, who recently went mad and turned renegade. But following his latest defeat in WEST COAST AVENGERS, says Steve Englehart, who writes both that series and THE FANTASTIC FOUR, "Quicksilver decides that being super-fast is not enough to beat **the West Coast Avengers** and the Fantastic Four. Therefore, he decides he will go back to the moon, pretend he's a nice guy, and as soon as no one is looking, plans to jump in the Terrigen Mists there and hopefully gain brand new powers worthy of a major super-villain."

In FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #21, also written by Steve, Quicksilver has indeed returned to the Inhumans' city, and the Inhumans order Crystal to leave the Fantastic Four and return to the moon and her husband. "She refuses," Steve says, "the Inhumans set out to get her back, and the Fantastic Four set out not to let her be taken." This crisis comes just as the Fantastic Four are embarked on a major quest that has been going on in their own series to find a mysterious race of aliens, and in the course of the annual, the High Evolutionary strikes, bringing the Evolutionary War to yet another front.

There will be two backup stories. One concerns Doctor Doom, the Fantastic Four's archnemesis, but the subject of the other is, once again, a secret.

X-MEN®

Then comes X-MEN ANNUAL #12, written by **Chris Claremont** and penciled by **Arthur Adams**. The most notable event here is the revival of the Savage Land, the prehistoric jungle hidden in the Antarctic, that was the home of **Ka-Zar** and his wife **Shanna** until it was destroyed by the alien menace **Terminus** in AVENGERS. Chris Claremont, who has written a number of tales set in the Savage Land, is pleased to be the one who brings it back to the Marvel Universe. "I had planned to bring back the Savage Land as part of the regular continuity. Basically what I'm doing is taking the story I was going to do in the regular run of THE



X-MEN and doing it in the annual, with the addition of the High Evolutionary.

"The High Evolutionary is trying to regenerate the Savage Land, in part because he wants to use it as a base," Chris explains. He is aided considerably in the process of making the Savage Land a viable habitat again by the revelation that many of its denizens — humans, dinosaurs, and other animals — were not killed in the disaster Terminus caused, but had escaped through an interdimensional portal that will be established in CLASSIC X-MEN #22.

However, a major obstacle to the High Evolutionary's plans arises. Terminus returns, or rather, a new Terminus to take the place of the one who apparently died in AVENGERS. Neither is the actual Terminus who debuted in FANTASTIC FOUR. "The suspicion is planted that the real Terminus is still down in the Earth's core," Chris says, "and he's sending up catspaws to test whoever's on the surface. So, Terminus rises to the surface, the X-Men team up with the High Evolutionary against him, and then help him regenerate the Savage Land."

In contrast with the other annuals, in this one the heroes will side with the High Evolutionary. Unaware of the High Evolutionary's morally questionable activities elsewhere in the world, the X-Men gladly help him in the good deed of restoring the Savage Land. "This is the issue in which, we hope, we will show the High Evolutionary is not altogether evil," Chris asserts. "Essentially, the High Evolutionary is a good guy in this story."

Other familiar faces from past Savage Land stories will appear, including the sinister **Zaladane**, the Savage Land **Mutates**, and Ka-Zar and Shanna themselves, bringing with them their new child, who will appear in a Marvel comic for the first time. (When last we saw Shanna, she was still pregnant!)

Even considering the major events taking place in the lead story, it may still be the back-up feature in this annual

that steals the show. It concerns the mad otherdimensional menace **Mojo** from the LONGSHOT Limited Series, who has been making films of the X-Men through the artificial eyes he gave one of their members, **Betsy Braddock**, alias **Psylocke**. Mojo did not anticipate that the X-Men would literally die in the course of last year's "Fall of the Mutants" storyline. (They were, of course, restored to life, but Mojo doesn't know that.)

"See," Chris says, "it's like this. When the X-Men died, the link was broken with Betsy's eyes. Mojo can't find them." And is he upset? "It's like, 'How dare they die without my permission? How dare they break their contract?' Mojo's getting frantic because the run of original X-MEN episodes he has is running out, and they have to have something out this week. He has to find fill-in X-Men. So he has a casting call." And every weird variety of X-Men counterpart shows up that Chris and Arthur can imagine. "Cartoon X-Men, Japanese X-Men, X-Turtles, every silly thing we can come up with, and the final thing is **X-Babies**." Yes, first there were **the Muppet Babies**, then **the Flintstone Kids**, and now this. But then Mojo loses control over the X-Babies, who begin acting like the real X-Men (but with baby-level powers), and, well, you'll just have to read it for yourselves. "We've got a lot of satire here," promises Chris

web of SPIDER-MAN®

Following this rather unusual book is WEB OF SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #4, which introduces yet another new character, a Miami-based black crimefighter known as **Bantam**. Should audience response to Bantam prove sufficiently good, he too will receive his own series. In this story Bantam is battling against the drug trade, which is being reorganized by the Kingpin and his Southern counterpart, **the Slug**

But the principal action involves the High Evolutionary's attempt to close down the Nexus of All Realities, which exists in the Florida Swamp inhabited by the swamp creature known as the Man-Thing Bantam and Spider-Man both get involved in this situation. **Steve Gerber**, the author of classic MAN-THING stories in the 1970s, is the writer of this annual, and he will deal with this swamp monster yet again in the MAN-THING series in the upcoming Marvel bi-weekly. The art will be by **Alex Saviuk** and **Keith Williams**.

the WEST COAST AVENGERS™

Meanwhile, in THE WEST COAST AVENGERS, **Hawkeye** finally found out that his wife **Mockingbird** was responsible for the death of the second **Phantom Rider** during a time trip. As a result Hawkeye and Mockingbird have a falling out, which in turn leads to the West Coast Avengers splitting into two groups. One, led by Mockingbird, believes that Avengers should kill opponents if necessary, and includes **Tigra** and **Moon Knight**. The other team, led by Hawkeye, believes Avengers must never kill, and includes **Wonder Man** and new members the Vision and **the Scarlet Witch**, as well as another new member whose identity cannot be revealed in this preview. (Yes, yet another secret.)

So WEST COAST AVENGERS ANNUAL #3, written by Steve Englehart, will consist of two twenty page stories. In one, Mockingbird's team goes to help scientist **Bill Foster**, who was enlisted to help build the High Evolutionary's Genetic Bomb and summoned the Avengers when he realized what it was for. In the course of this story, Foster will resume his old identity as the super-powered **Giant-Man**. Meanwhile, Hawkeye's team heads for the African

kingdom of Wakanda to help its ruler, **the Black Panther** (who appears this summer in his own Limited Series), against the High Evolutionary's attempts to steal Wakanda's supply of the rare metal vibranium.

the SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN®

Spider-Man's involvement in the Evolutionary War culminates with SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #6, written by **Gerry Conway** and penciled and inked by **Sal Buscema**, which brings back perhaps the last member of the Web-Slinger's supporting cast you ever expected to see — the clone of Spider-Man's deceased girlfriend **Gwen Stacy**! (Conway wrote the original stories concerning the clone back in the 1970s.) It turns out that Gwen's clone also has some connection with the High Evolutionary that will be revealed in this annual.

On a more cosmic level, the High Evolutionary encounters the Young Gods, who have not been seen since THOR #300. This is a group of six men and six women who have advanced genetically beyond the level of normal human beings. Each of them represents one aspect of humanity: **Physician**, **Craftsmaker**, **Farmer**, **Philosopher**, **Hunter**, **Poet**, **Priest**, **Sailor**, **Artist**, **Warrior**, **Musician**, and **Scientist**. They have been taken under the guidance of the enigmatic Celestials, who created the Eternals, and now the Young Gods must decide whether or not to oppose the High Evolutionary's plans for the evolution of the rest of humanity. The Young Gods are also candidates for a possible series of their own.

the AVENGERS™

Finally, the war comes to its close in AVENGERS ANNUAL #17, written by **Walter Simonson** and penciled by Sal Buscema. At the time this preview is being written, it is still too early to give details of what will happen in this culminating story. Walter Simonson, however, plans to guest star various "reserve" Avengers who are not currently active members of the team.

Running through all eleven annuals will be a special back-up series, "The Saga of the High Evolutionary," which will recount the life story of the character up until the beginning of the Evolutionary War itself. Mark Gruenwald will write this series himself; it will be penciled by **Paul Neary** and edited by Ralph Macchio.

So what Marvel readers have awaiting them from the 1988 Annuals is an adventure on the grandest of scales, ranging all over the planet, from cities like New York and Miami to fantasy settings like Subterranea and Nova Roma, involving even beings from another galaxy altogether — the Skrulls — and with the ultimate destiny of all of humanity at stake. In the course of the war against the High Evolutionary, major positive changes will occur in the Marvel Universe: the restoration of the Savage Land, the return of Giant-Man and the Young Gods, and the creation of two brand new heroes. In fact, "The Evolutionary War" not only has repercussions in some of the regular series, but is the launching point for a brand new one, SPEEDBALL, and perhaps two more — YOUNG GODS and THE BANTAM, if the readers respond enthusiastically enough to the characters

So if you too are looking for the return of "the Big Event" to Marvel annuals, "The Evolutionary War" should not leave you disappointed.

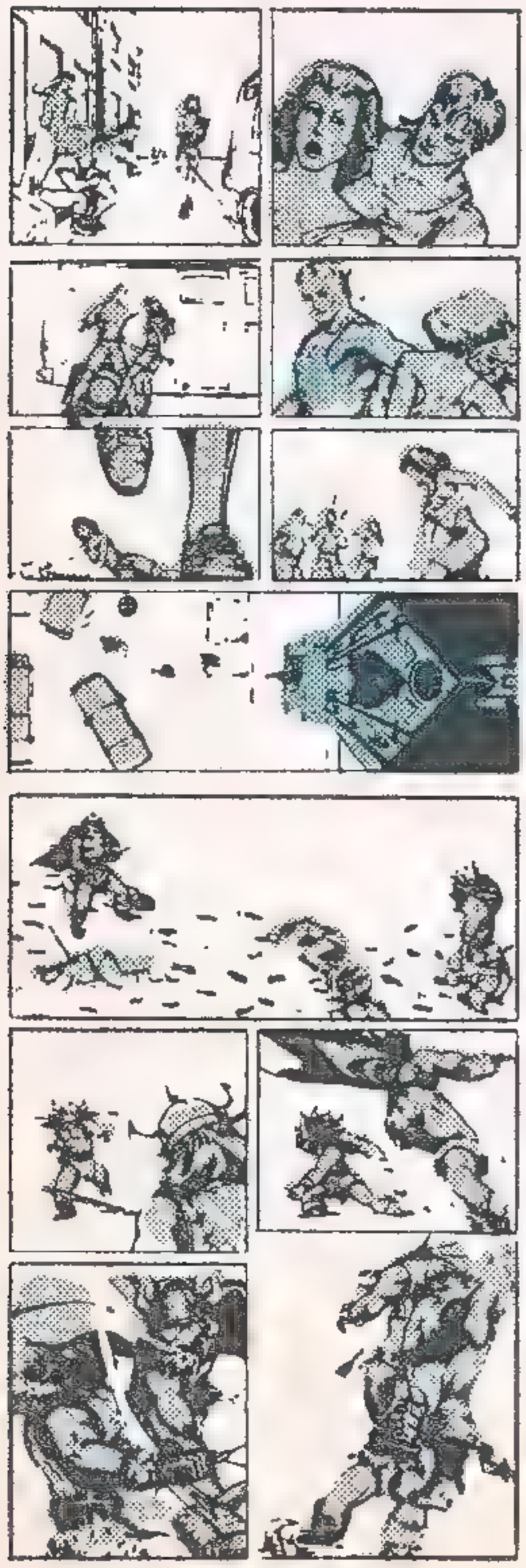
—Peter Sanderson

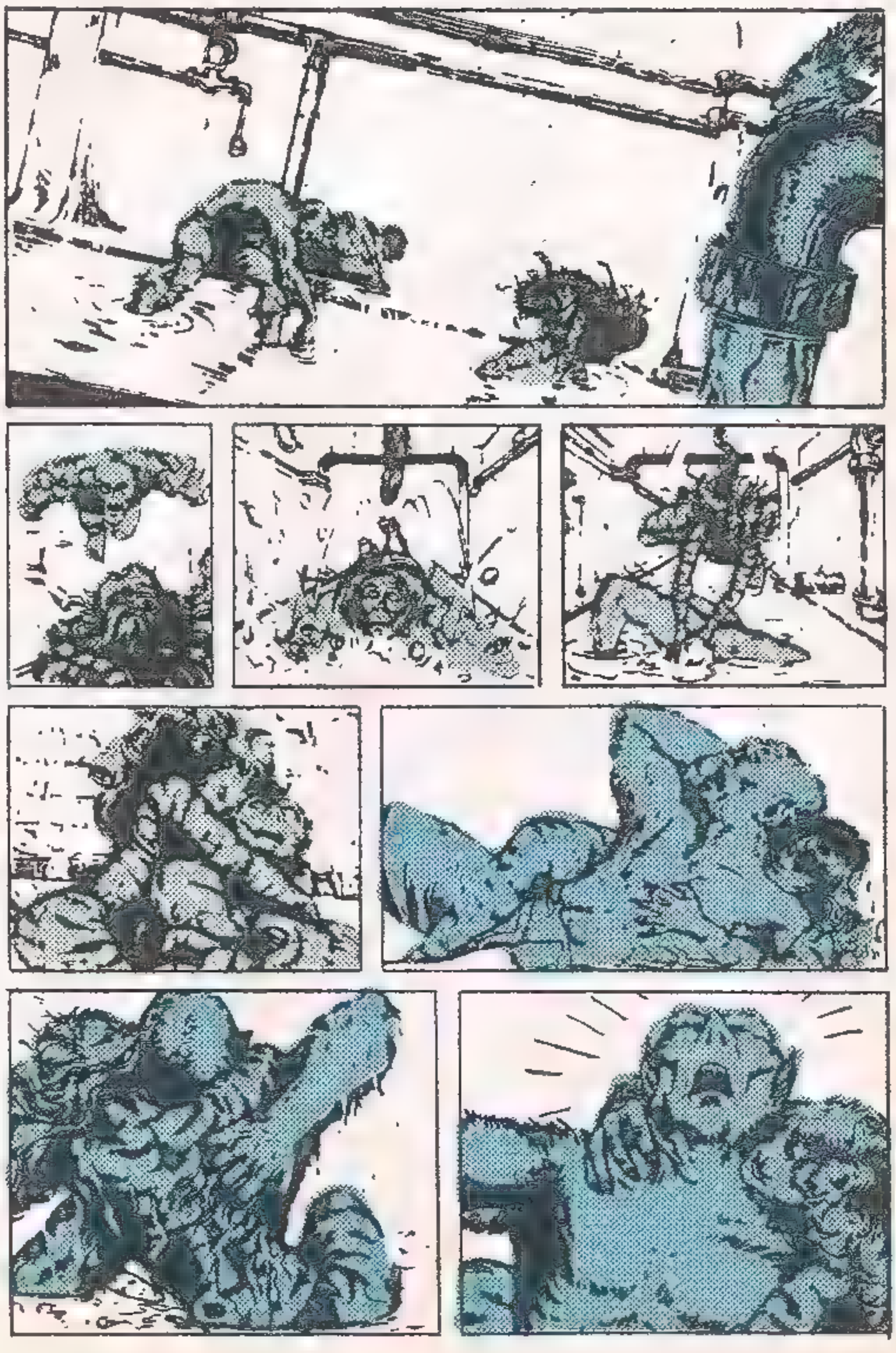
NEW TALENT DEPARTMENT

The Atlanta Fantasy Fair is one of the most prestigious science-fiction/comic conventions in the nation. Each summer the A.F.F. sponsors such a menagerie of events that there's not an idle moment for anyone at the convention. These events include art shows, art auctions, amateur film contests, a draw-off, costume contests, film screenings, fantasy gaming, and various workshops. For many the highlight of these events is the MARVEL AGE ART CONTEST because it gives participants the opportunity to see their art published in a Marvel magazine. The winners of the pencilling and inking divisions get to have their work published in MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE. These winners are chosen by a panel of judges from Marvel Comics. Last year's winners were **Keith Paul** (penciler) and **J. Adam Walters** (inker).

This is the second consecutive year that Keith, a 23-year-old graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, which produced such greats as **Walt Simonson**, has won the contest. He lives in Swansea, Massachusetts and learned about the Atlanta Fantasy Fair through advertisements in various comic books. He started reading comics as a child, but didn't begin drawing until he entered high school. He cites **Bill Sienkiewicz**, **Neal Adams**, and the brothers **Buscema** as his major influences.

Although his preferred medium was not the comic book field, Keith decided to give the Fantasy Fair contest a shot. Now that he's won two years in a row, he says he's getting more serious about the industry. In fact, editor **Howard Mackie** was so impressed with his work, he gave Keith a six page **Vision** story to pencil, which will see print soon. Keith says that he is looking forward to a regular assignment.





In critiquing Keith's work, Managing Art Director **Don Perlin** said, "Keith's strong points are his layouts and storytelling abilities. I can tell what's happening in the story without any copy. His biggest drawback, however, is his anatomy. He can draw big, muscular characters like **Conan** well, but he has trouble drawing ordinary characters, especially ones in loose clothing. He should also work on female facial features and head construction.

"As I said, Keith's panel setup is good. He uses various camera angles and shots so the viewer doesn't get bored. But he shouldn't compose his panels so centrally. He overdoes his line technique by adding too much gray. An inker would have a tough time with this type of shading; Keith should try to think in terms of black and white. This will enable the inker to give him better results. Keith should take equal interest in every part of his drawing so as to avoid having parts of his drawings looking dramatically better drawn than others.

"Finally, Keith should watch size-relationships. Characters one to another, objects to characters and objects to objects. Otherwise, I think that Keith will make a fine comic book penciler once he's overcome these flaws."

J. Adam Walters is a 25-year-old inker from Gainesville, Georgia. He earned a degree in commercial art from the University of North Alabama, but he claims to be mostly self-taught in the comic book medium. Although he only moved to Georgia last August, he has been attending the Atlanta Fantasy Fair for the past five years, driving all the way from his previous residence in Tennessee. This year, however, Adam threw out his knee while walking down a broken escalator on his way to the Fair's costume competition. Consequently, he had to leave the Fair and was not present for the judging of his artwork. His friend had to contact him to tell him that he had won. "When the contest officials notified me, they told me that my artwork had been stolen," Adam recalls. "They had no idea that my friend had already returned it to me."

Adam has been reading comics all his life. His major influences include **Karl Kesel**, **Jerry Ordway**, **John Byrne** and **Terry Austin**.

Adam's best friend, **Keith Bowden**, won the contest the previous year, so Adam was determined to win this year. "I work 16 hours a day on my artwork, so I must love it!"

Don Perlin had this to say about Adam's work: "He's neat, but his lines need more variety in their weight. It looks as though he's using the same mechanical pen for every figure. Adam's line thickness is the same throughout. His foregrounds should stress heavy lines and he should lighten up as he moves toward the background. This technique will give his work a three-dimensional feeling. It's a problem that many beginners encounter, but it looks as though Adam will be able to meet the challenge."

So let's all welcome Keith and Adam to the wonderful world of comic book art. Good luck, guys!

—Glenn Herdling

THE MARVEL® AGE 1976 PT. V

Get ready! We're about to wrap up our look back at 1976, so we'll be going from sword-and-sorcery to martial arts to cosmic adventure in one swell foop!

CONAN THE BARBARIAN met his truest love in 1976, as **Roy Thomas** and **John Buscema** introduced, at long last, the she-pirate **Belit**! The Cimmerian's courtship of the Queen of the Black Coast was fast and furious, as was everything in the life of the woman legend called the daughter of the death-goddess **Derketa**. As **Conan**, Belit, and her Black Corsairs sailed the coast in search of plunder, danger came from an unknown source: Belit was kidnaped by **Amra**, lord of the lions! Conan rescued Belit and defeated Amra in hand-to-hand combat, thus winning for himself the name of Amra among the company of the Black Corsairs!

On a quest to win a page from the mystic book of Skelos, the death-god **Dagon** fooled Conan and Belit into battling each other — but it was only the first of many battles between former allies! Coming to their senses, they saw the page being stolen by **Red Sonja**, whose employers had quite a different use in mind for the sorcerous artifact! In a crossover into Sonja's own book, MARVEL FEATURE, the Cimmerian and the She-Devil again crossed swords — but before the combat concluded, they were tossed back in time by a renegade wizard, and Conan's new opponent was the fabled Atlantean — **King Kull**! Conan and Belit got out of this time-tossed free-for-all with their hides, but with Belit no closer to her heart's goal: using the booty from pirating to gain revenge on those who had made her younger life a hell. The CONAN ANNUAL turned to another period in the barbarian's long career, as he strived against his eternal nemesis, **Thoth-Amon**, in "The Phoenix on the Sword!"

Red Sonja's enemies in MARVEL FEATURE included **Balek the Behemoth**, the monstrous **Bear-God**, and the **Sons of Set** — as well as the aforementioned Cimmerian, of course! In his own title, meanwhile, KULL THE DESTROYER looked back on his origins, now that his throne had been usurped by **Thulsa Doom**. Kull set off with the minstrel **Ridondo**, facing such wonders as the **Kraken** and leagues of winged monsters. All of them he defeated with grim dispatch — so how to account for his strange visions, which saw himself lying dead at the feet of Doom?

These heroes created by pulp fiction writer **Robert E. Howard** took further bows in the black-and-white magazine, SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN. The adaptation of his novel *Conan the Conqueror* was concluded there, with everyone's favorite Aquilonian king at last besting the wizard **Xaltotun**. Howard tales continued to be adapted: "The Haunters of Castle Crimson," "The Devil in Iron," "Shadows in Zamboula," and "People of the Black Circle," among others. And other Howard heroes were not neglected, either. **Solomon Kane** got his licks in, matching faith and steel against sorcery and lycanthropy. And **Bran Mak Morn's** classic adventure, "Worms in the Earth," was adapted by the matchless team of Roy Thomas and **Tim Conrad**!

Matching SAVAGE SWORD in magazine popularity was the star-studded DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU! A multi-part **Iron Fist** tale began the year, as the **Living Weapon** died and did *not* go to heaven! The soul of the **Firebird**, a mystic entity who embodied all that is best about the human race, had been captured by **Dhasha Khan**, lord of the underworld — and the Firebird's weapon and salvation was **Danny Rand**! "Swordquest," a four-part journey into 16th century Korea, followed the young samurai **Kwang-Che Yu** as he hunted down his mortal enemy, **the Raven**! But just in case all this weren't enough to make DEADLY HANDS one of the most unusual and surprising mags in history, writer **Bill Mantlo** moved **the Sons of the Tiger** series into high gear, creating two of the most intriguing heroes of the 70s! Internal strife tore the Tiger-Sons apart, and they discarded their amulets — when all three amulets were picked up and donned by one man, **Hector Ayala** became **the White Tiger**!

The comics' first Puerto Rican hero, the White Tiger greeted a world filled with intrigue and confusion — his first foes were as heroically minded as himself! They included **the Prowler**, and the mysterious new hero clad like a playing card, who prompted the question, "Who is the **Jack of Hearts?**" As Tiger-Son **Abe Brown** flew to Africa to become **the Black Tiger**, leader of a revolutionary front, the remaining heroes — **Hector**, Jack, and their new friends, Iron Fist and **Shang-Chi**, crushed a crime syndicate that had dominated the drug trade in New York! But the White Tiger both won and lost the war, when he discovered the syndicate's head was none other than his own little brother, **Hippo**! A biographical retelling of "The Bruce Lee Story" finished the year for DEADLY HANDS, a year that included everything but the kitchen sink!

IRON FIST's quest to save his girlfriend **Colleen Wing** from her captors led him first to London, where he vanquished **Radion** and **Scimitar**, and then to **Halwan** — where **Angar** had brainwashed Colleen and turned her into a weapon against him! Danny used the power of the Iron Fist to meld minds with Colleen and clear her soul, but her tormentor, **Master Khan**, escaped, leaving in his wake tantalizing hints about Danny's heritage and the true nature of K'un-Lun! Returning to New York, the Fist met **Chaka**, crime-lord intent on using gang warfare to establish a new empire. When Iron Fist got in the way, Chaka faked his

own death and framed Danny for it, but Chaka was revealed in the end, when his own brother entered the fray, and paid a fatal price for it. **Chris Claremont** and **John Byrne** who wrote and drew these sagas, were at their best!

Marvel's other martial arts maven, MASTER OF KUNG FU, grappled with the riddles of **Darkstrider** and his eldritch menagerie, and from there met one of his natural friends, as well as natural foes — **Shen Kuei**, also known as **Cat! Sir Denis Nayland Smith's** "games of deceit and death" sent **Shang-Chi** on an espionage mission that involved him with Cat in a fight without pity — and more's the pity, when Cat's beloved, **Juliette**, could only end their fight by stabbing herself! The glory and the pain of Shang-Chi's life led onward, as a multi-part drama slowly, insidiously brought his father, **Fu Manchu**, back into Shang's life. First, Shang and **Marlon Brando** look-alike, **James Larner**, cracked the Murder Agency, a group that was systematically assassinating British agents. The trail led to **Shockwave**, an electrifyingly mad opponent, and to Fu Manchu's concubine, **Ducharme**, who revealed herself as a double agent! **Fah Lo Suee** re-entered the scene and after much deceit and death, revealed to her brother Shang the ultimate plot of their father: to blow the moon out of its orbit. In the resulting geophysical chaos, Fu Manchu would endure and conquer, reestablishing the glory of ancient China! It was the plan of a madman, but could any man stop it? The creative team of **Doug Moench** and **Paul Gulacy** made sure we'd stick around to find out, as they imbued each issue with a savagery and a poetry rarely found in comics then or now.

Savage battle of another stripe could be found in KA-ZAR, as the jungle lord's adventures took a bold new direction! The super-villain **Klaw**, reporter **Tandy Snow**, and paleontologist **Bernard Kloss** joined **Kevin Plunder** in the Savage Land, as it faced the threat of extradimensional aliens! Sky-sharks, reptilian warriors, gnomes, and gladiatorial combat took the stage; KA-ZAR discovered a rare blend of science fiction, fantasy, and barbarian combat!

Another series that attempted much the same blend was SKULL THE SLAYER, though deadline problems and a variety of writers kept the book from having a consistent focus. Nonetheless, **Jim Scully** and his comrades fought the good fight, against Egyptians from the time of the Pharoahs, against the sinister **Slitherogue**, against the knights of **Merlin's** era, and against a legion of ancient Incas led by a man from their own era! The series ended with Scully and company outnumbered by Incas, but its plot threads would be picked up in the future in MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE!

CAPTAIN MARVEL had a score of his own plot threads to worry about, courtesy of master plotter **Steve Englehart**! He and his soulmate **Rick Jones** faced down **the Stranger**, in the OK Coral of Space; took on **the Destroyer**, crazed by his failure to kill **Thanos**; and shrugged off the **Null-Trons** and the nefarious **Killing Machine**! With each battle, Rick and Mar-Vell grew closer and more equal — and that was precisely the source of their greatest peril! **The Supreme Intelligence** was engineering the merger of Rick and Mar-Vell into one being, so that they might be easy prey for him when the Millennia Bloom blossomed, making them subservient to his will! But the Supremor's plans backfired on himself, and Rick and the Kree captain returned to Earth, independent and free of each other, yet trusting each other with their lives. Cap set off on his new life, teaming with the **Human Torch** to outwit an accidentally reactivated Sentry.

Mar-Vell's ally-to-be, WARLOCK, reached the apocalyptic end of his own series, as written and drawn by cosmic craftsman **Jim Starlin**. With **the In-Betweener** coming to transform **Adam Warlock** into his murderous future self, **the Magus**, Adam had little choice — he traveled into the future, and killed himself before he could become a threat that would endanger galaxies! Years in the future, we would see this event from a different perspective, as the Adam of 1976 appeared to kill off his present self. But that's a story for another time; Adam still had years to live, and in his remaining time he had a grand old evening or two with **Pip the Troll**, tracked down and prevented the Star-Thief from extinguishing the heavens; and met an ancient hermit who prophesied all that was to come. Starlin and the hermit were true to their word — everything prophesied in the last issue of WARLOCK came to pass in one way or another — no matter how joyful or how grim the consequences!

And that wraps up our look at the Marvel of 1976! It was a great year — but here at Marvel, we won't live in the past! Instead, let's allow the classics of yesteryear to lead us to even greater heights in the future! As someone else once said in these pages — Excelsior!

— Brian Nelson

MARVEL COMICS PRICE GUIDE

You can complete your set of '76 Marvels with the issues we covered this month, but here's what you should expect to pay for them at your local comics specialty shop. As always, our source is **Robert Overstreet's** THE COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDE #17. You know by now that this is only a guide, that actual prices may vary, and that they should be even less for copies in fair or poor condition, right? We thought so!

	CONDITION Good	Fine	Mint
■ **CAPTAIN MARVEL**			
42, 44–47		.40	.80
43 (**Wrightson** inks)		50	1.00
■ **CONAN THE BARBARIAN**			
48 (**Belit** app.)	.50	1 50	3.00
59 (Belit origin)	.25	.75	1.50
60	.25	80	1.60
61–69		.50	1.00
ANNUAL 2	.40	1.20	2.40
■ **DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU** (magazine)			
20 (origin **White Tiger**)	.30	.90	1 80
21–27, 29–31		60	1.20
28 (origin **Jack of Hearts**)	.40	1.20	2.50
■ **IRON FIST**			
3–5	70	2.00	4.00
6–10	50	1.50	3.00
■ **KA-ZAR**			
14–19		30	60
■ **KULL THE DESTROYER**			
16–18		.30	60
■ **MARVEL FEATURE** (Red Sonja)			
2–7		50	1.00
■ **MASTER OF KUNG FU**			
36–40		40	.80
41–47		.30	.60
ANNUAL 1 (ga **Iron Fist**)		60	1.20
■ **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN** (magazine)			
10	.70	2 00	4 00
11–20	.60	1 75	3 50
■ **SKULL THE SLAYER**			
3–8		.30	60
■ **WARLOCK**			
11–15	.35	1 00	2 00

IT DOES NOT COMPUTE

This month's letter column title comes to us courtesy of Jonathan Barnes of Vernon, B.C., Canada. Thanks, Jonathan! But say, are you implying that our lilting letter columns don't always make perfect sense? Why, we've never jgfd bo grimpfixzled in our lives!

Don't worry, though, Jonathan, we love ya anyway. And as for the rest of you out there, remember: We need a nifty new title for this column each and every month, so strap on those thinking caps and send your ideas on in! If we use your title, we'll even print your name in this space as our way of saying "thanks." It may not be a diamond ring, but at least this way, you don't have to marry us!

And just so you don't think our letter columns don't make you a better person, we're going to teach a quick lesson in patience. Ready? Okay, here goes: Don't look now, but this month's Pen Pal section contains the long-awaited permanent name of the Marvel Age Pen Pals Club. Wait! Don't skip to the end to find out what it is! Read the rest of the column first. We know you're probably dying of suspense, but hey, nobody said lessons in patience would be easy!

Dear Marvel,

I've been collecting Marvel Comics for only about seven months now and as I'm writing this letter, I have 86 comic books. Is this good, average, or poor?

Also, I have some questions:

1) I've been looking through my Marvels and I see that the **Vision** was the original **Human Torch**. If FANTASTIC FOUR #1 was the first Marvel Comic, what comic book did the *original* Human Torch burn in? A flashback, maybe? Also, the same question goes for the **All-Winners Squad**.

2) In MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE #57, **Stan's** Soapbox shows the premiere issue of CAPTAIN AMERICA but the issue number is #100. What happened to #s 1–99?

3) Will there be a new **Black Panther** comic book? I saw him in FANTASTIC FOUR #311 and really liked the character.

Peter Hughes
1741 Becker St.
Schenectady, NY 12304

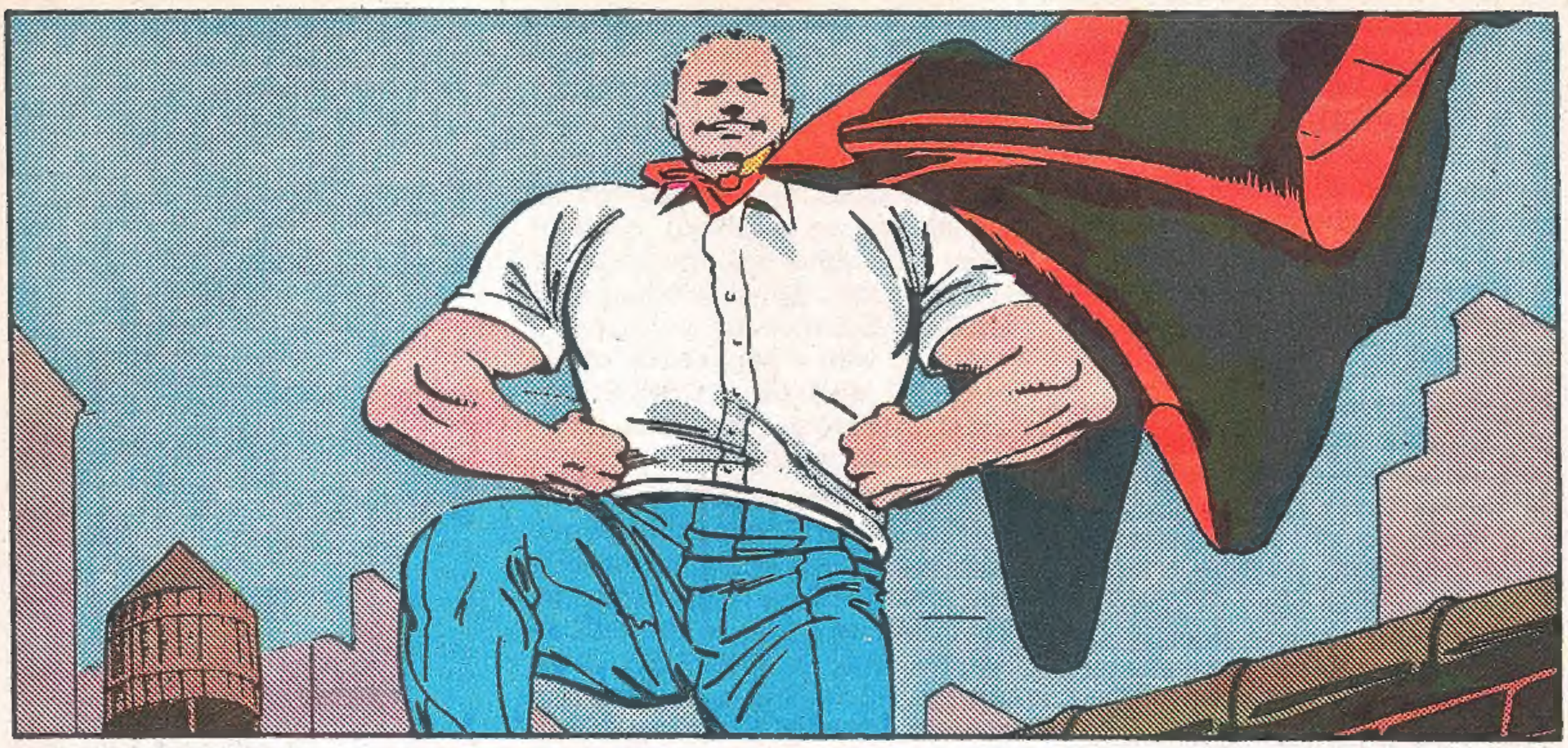
Welcome aboard, Peter! 86 comic books in only seven months? That's great! In fact, at this rate, your comics will be crowding you out of your house before you know it!

To answer your questions in order:

1) It's true that when FANTASTIC FOUR #1 was published in 1961, it became the first official Marvel Comic. But you see, before the folks responsible for that comic book started calling themselves Marvel, they went under other names such as Timely and Atlas. In fact, the company has been publishing comics since 1939 when MARVEL COMICS #1 featured the debuts of the Sub-Mariner and — you guessed it — the original Human Torch! Seven years later, the Torch and his teenage sidekick Toro teamed up with the Sub-Mariner, Captain America and his pal Bucky, the fleet-footed Whizzer, and the mighty Miss America to form the All-Winners Squad. Although the Squad made only two appearances in its brief career, in ALL-WINNERS #s 19 and 21 (circa 1946), those stories have remained comic book classics.

Incidentally, if you want to get more info on the early days of Marvel, you might want to keep your eyes peeled for THE STORY OF MARVEL COMICS which should be appearing in book stores and comics specialty shops in time for Christmas. It's written by Stan Lee, one of the men who knows Marvel history best — mostly because he helped make it! Stay tuned to MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE for further details on the book as they develop.

2) Yes, that cover really was from the first issue of CAPTAIN AMERICA. The reason it was numbered #100 is that CAPTAIN AMERICA started out as a science-fiction/fantasy series called TALES OF SUSPENSE. In the early '60s, TALES OF SUSPENSE turned to super hero stories as it introduced an armored gent called Iron Man. Then, in issue #59, ol' Shellhead moved over and started sharing TALES OF SUSPENSE with Cap. This continued through issue #99, by which point both Iron Man and Cap had become so popular that each one needed a comic book of his own. So IRON MAN got a brand new series of his own, while TALES OF SUSPENSE became CAPTAIN AMERICA as of issue #100. See?



Who says our letter columns don't always make sense?

3) Are you a telepathic mutant or something, Peter? Not only do we have plans for a BLACK PANTHER Limited Series, but if you run right out to your local stand or comics specialty shop, you should still be able to find a copy of the first issue! Better hurry, though. Considering that in the first issue alone, the Black Panther loses both his jungle-honed powers and his country, the series is sure to sell out fast.

Dear MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE,

I've been playing the Marvel Super Heroes role playing game with my friends for over two years, and you may find this hard to believe, but the very first character I ever created was named **Captain Zero**. I thought of the name during lunch one day at school and everyone laughed but I proceeded to give the name to that character and have been using him ever since. So you can imagine my amazement when I saw a character by that name in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #295. Don't worry, I'm not planning to sue you or anything like that (oh, and please don't sue me either), but I was just wondering what the odds were of both of us coming up with such an offbeat name. I'd also like to add that I'll send you a free package of plaid pillow cases if you print this letter.

Until **Iceman** joins a tanning spa, Make Mine Marvel!

Barry Miller
1316 Stacey La.
Boulder City, NV 89005

Odds, eh? We dunno, Barry, maybe a zillion to one?

Oh, and as for those plaid pillow cases, could you try to get ones that have purple polka dots mixed in? It's so hard finding sheets that match our decor.

There's that tell-tale canary yellow background again. That can mean only two things: Either the traffic light's about to turn red, or it's time for this month's LETTER OF THE MONTH! As you probably know, we sift through our jumbo sacks of mail each month looking for a letter (or sometimes even two) that we think will be of particular interest to Marveldom at large. Then we print that letter in HUGGA BUNCH (no, no, just kidding — we print it right here, of course).

This month's Letter of the Month asks a question that we think quite a few people might be mulling over in the backs of their minds.

Dear MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE,

I've seen original art being sold at comics conventions and seen ads in fanzines. I've always wondered how these people get a hold of original pages. On the same lines, what does Marvel do with the artwork after it's been published?

Joseph Satter
2110 Lyndale Ave. N.
Minneapolis, MN 55411

Once a comic book has been published, Marvel returns the original artwork to the artists (penciler and inker) who produced it . . . and with all the comics we publish, you can imagine what an enormous job that is! Often, an artist will then sell the original artwork to a comics collector or retailer, which is one way that the pages wind up being sold at conventions or through the mail.

And now that you know where it came from, why not think about buying yourself a piece of original artwork the next time you see some for sale? Some of it can get pretty expensive, but a framed original comics page can liven up any den or rumpus room. Check it out!

Dear MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE,

I was just reading MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE #58 and I noticed that no girls were listed in the Pen Pals section. This is not the first time it has happened! I've noticed that since you started the Pen Pal page, only a few girls have been posted. I'm not saying that it is your fault; girls do not openly admit to being comics fans. It is a lot harder for a girl to be a comic book collector than it is for boys. Comic book collecting is usually viewed as a thing a 10-year-old boy might pursue. A majority of people know this is not true, but just the same, a vast minority (made up mostly of family and peers) give girls a hard time for enjoying this pastime. People of both sexes and all ages read and enjoy comics. I would really appreciate it if you would, in some way, express this to all of your readers, not just the girls. It is all right to openly admit to being a comic book fan. If others think you are strange because of this, they don't know what they're missing.

Marie Cummins
5431 N. Lieb
Chicago, IL 60630

We couldn't agree with you more, Marie! Thousands of people, old and young, male and female, read and enjoy comic books. And if we keep growing at this rate, we'll be able to take over the country any day now!

There's a simple reason why we've run the names and addresses of so many more male than female pen pals, though: A lot more guys than gals have written in asking to be pen pals. We're not quite sure why so few distaff Marvelites have written in, but we hope that your letter encourages a few to come out of their shells and join the fun!

Incidentally, if anyone out there

would like Marie as his/her pen pal, she's 15 years old and her favorite Marvel titles are THE AVENGERS, THE NEW MUTANTS, and SPIDER-MAN.

Oops! It looks like the Pen Pals section is starting to creep into the rest of this letter column as well! Maybe we'd better officially switch over before the pen pals take over completely!

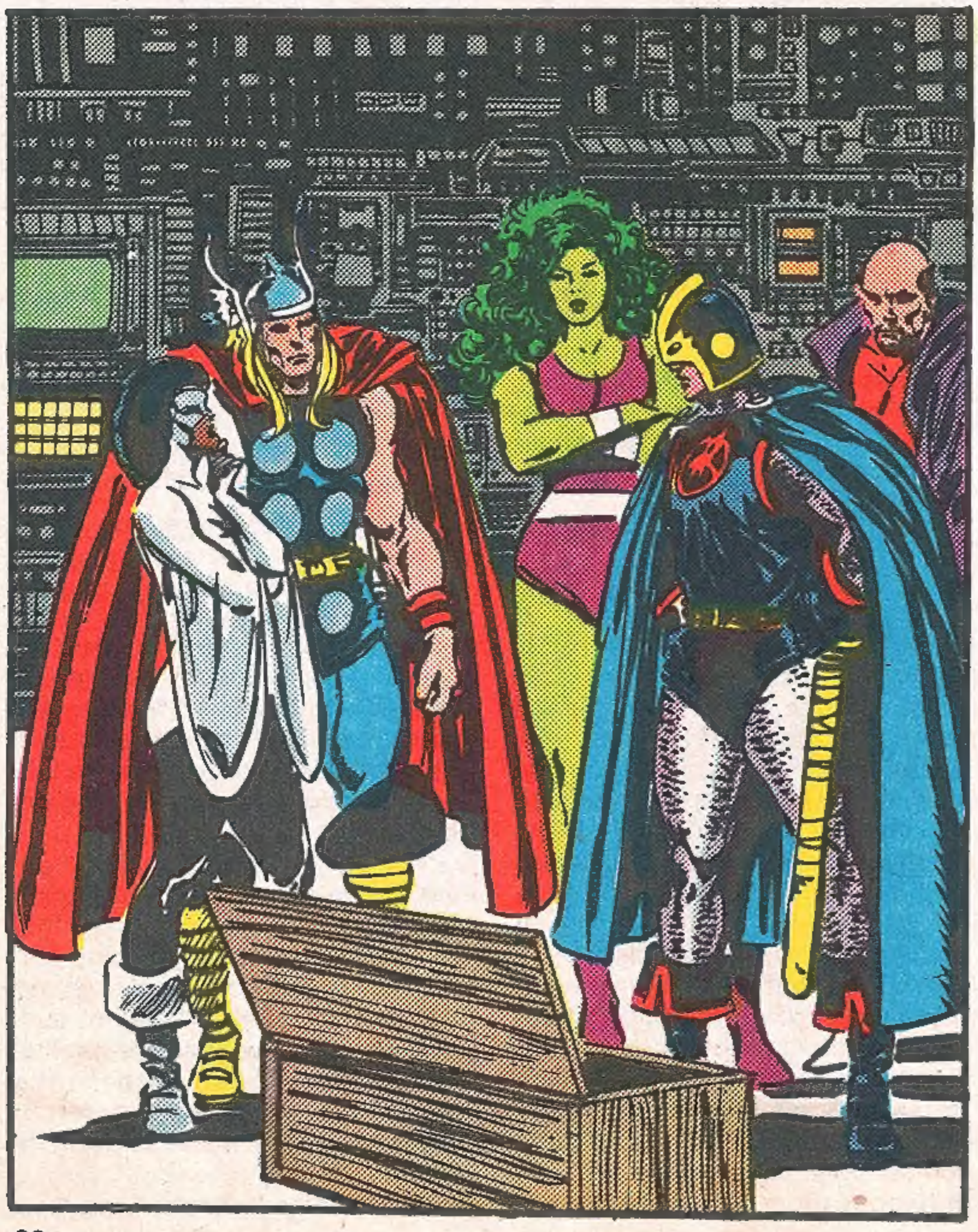
Ta ta ta ta ta ta! Sound the bugles and blow the trumpets! At long last, the time has come to officially christen the Pen Pals Club!

A whole bunch of you sent in some great ideas for names. Some of our favorites were: "Pen-Pal-ladium" from Thomas Frier of Ottowa, Ontario; "Marvel's Pals" from Jason Heaton of Birmingham, Ala.; "Pen Pals International" from Arthur Lee; "Marvel Meetpoint" from Barbel Schmidt of West Germany; "The Collector Connection" from Harris Newman of Willowdale, Ontario, Canada; "Snazzy Salicrup's Pen Pal Letter Legions" from Jonathan Burke of Elk Grove, CA; "Marvel Mates" from Don Patterson of Calgary, Alberta, Canada; "The Marvel Connection" from Vincent Morrison of Wyandanch, NY; and "Friends for Fans" from Marc Wilofsky of Pomona, NY.

But as much as we liked all of those suggestions (as well as all the others we received), none of them had quite the ring we were looking for. So MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE Editor Jim Salicrup has come up with a suggestion of his own — MARVEL CORRESPONDENTS! What do you think of it? Write and let us know.

And while you're writing, if you'd like to be listed in this section yourself, just send your name, address, age, and the titles of your three favorite Marvel series to Marvel Correspondents, c/o MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE at the address atop this column, and we'll do the rest. Is that service or what?

Now get ready, because here come some more friendly folks who are looking for people to swap stories, observations, and knock-knock jokes with! Dust off that expensive, cream-colored stationery you got for your birthday and drop 'em a line! You'll be glad you did.



MARVEL® CORRESPONDENTS

Art Brown
119 Basswood Dr.
Mauldin, SC 29662
Age: 17
Favorites: X-MEN, POWER PACK, AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

Joshua Day
P.O. Box 37
Copper Hill, VA 24079
Age: 14
Favorites: THOR, ELFQUEST, X-MEN

Manuel J. Lamm
822 W. 10th #4
San Pedro, CA 90731
Age: 15
Favorites: X-FACTOR, X-MEN, NEW MUTANTS

Will Mason
130 Triple Tree Dr.
Carrollton, GA 30117
Age: 11
Favorites: SPIDER-MAN, GROO, EXCALIBUR

David O'Neal
P.O. Box 1044
Yellville, AR 72687
Age: 13
Favorites: EXCALIBUR, X-MEN, X-FACTOR

Chris Dowd
58 Millspaugh Dr.
Fairfield, CT 06430
Age: 13
Favorites: NEW MUTANTS, D.P. 7, SILVER SURFER

Randy Bryant
1115 Meadowlark Dr.
Enon, OH 45323
Age: 15
Favorites: AVENGERS, AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, X-MEN

Paula Rockstroh
3573 Tankerland Ct.
San Jose, CA 95121
Age: 15
Favorites: NEW MUTANTS, ALPHA FLIGHT, G.I. JOE

Yainina Razek
221 Washington Hwy.
Amherst, NY 14226
Age: 15
Favorites: X-MEN, NEW MUTANTS, X-FACTOR

Pat Renetta
41 Flori Ct.
Oakley, CA 94561
Age: 14
Favorites: X-MEN, CLASSIC X-MEN, THOR

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1. C	5. C	9. B	13. B	17. C
2. B	6. A	10. A	14. C	18. A
3. B	7. C	11. A	15. A	19. A
4. A	8. B	12. C	16. C	20. D

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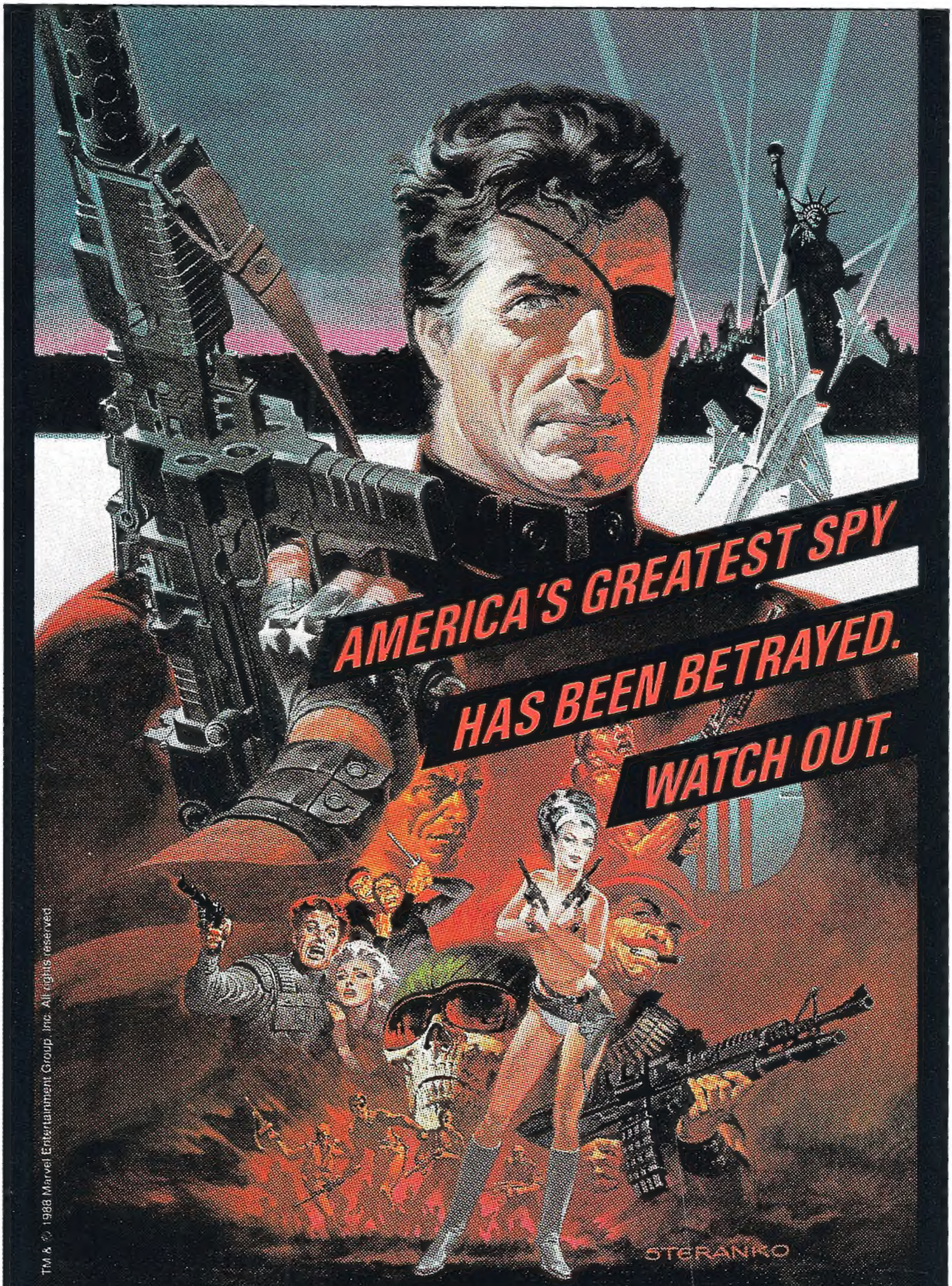

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